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My Awful Wife.

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My Awful Wife.

A COMEDY

IN FOUR ACTS.

—BY—

Joseph H. Slater.

—X—

—TO WHICH IS ADDED—

A DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUMES—CAST OF THE CHARACTERS—ENTRANCES AND EXITS—RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE PERFORMERS ON THE STAGE, AND THE WHOLE OF THE STAGE BUSINESS.

—X—

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PS635
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MY AWFUL WIFE.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

JASPER JAY MUDDLE, ... *A hen-pecked husband.*
CHARLES MELROSE, } *(can double)* ..... *Ada Bramble's lover.*
DR. CRANIUM, } ..... *A Mind Specialist.*
PHINEAS DABBLER, ... *An inventor and a friend of Jasper Muddle.*
DEACON JEREMIAH SPYDER, ... *A snake in the grass.*
SAMMY COBBS, ... *Looking for a job.*
ICEMAN MALONEY, ... *The village ice peddler.*
INSPECTOR PINCHIM, ... *An officer of the law.*
MRS. JEZABEL MUDDLE, ... *Jasper Jay Muddle's wife.*
ADA BRAMBLE, ... *Mrs. Muddle's daughter.*
SALLY SMART, ... *Servant.*

TIME OF PLAYING—2 hours and 30 minutes.

SYNOPSIS ON LAST PAGE.

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PROPERTIES.

ACT I.—Table and two chairs, sofa, furniture and bric-a-brac, hassock, screen, curtains for between two flies, razor and strop for Muddle, sealed telegram for Sally, novel for Ada.

ACT II.—Poker chips and matches for Muddle, playing cards for Deacon Spyder.

ACT III.—Call bell, medicine case with a couple of vials and a whiskey flask for Dabbler.

ACT IV.—Wine bottle, two glasses and cigar box with a few cigars for Muddle, two chunks of ice and an ice prong for iceman, warrant for officer.

COSTUMES.

JASPER MUDDLE.—Light gray suit, gray bald wig and side whiskers.

DABBLER.—Light summer suit, plug hat and full beard.

CHARLES.—Light or navy blue suit.

DEACON SPYDER.—Black Prince Albert coat and trousers and side whiskers.

DR. CRANIUM.—Gray Prince Albert coat and trousers, gray bald wig.

OFFICER.—Dark business suit.

SAMMY.—Light suit, (loud pattern)—first wig red, second a plain scalp, third a brown dress wig.

MRS. MUDDLE.—Dark house dress.

ADA.—Light summer costumes.

SALLY.—Servants house dress, white apron.

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My Awful Wife.

ACT I.

SCENE.—Parlor; fancy door C., *sofa near* L. 2 E., *table and two chairs* R., *hassock on floor,* L. *of chair, screen up* L. C., *handsome furniture and bric-a-brac about room;* R. *and* L. E.—ADA BRAMBLE *discovered seated at table, reading a novel.*

Ada. What a noble sentiment, and how beautifully expressed. (*reads aloud*) "I want no star in Heaven to guide me;
I want no sun, no moon to shine;
Whilst I have you sweetheart beside me;
Whilst I am sure that you are mine."
(*places book on table*
That breathes the very soul of truth and poetry. Too bad that in this mercenary age "The almighty dollar" should be considered the beginning and end of everything. The golden key that opens every door. The old adage was "That knowledge is power." The proverb has been changed now-a-days to "Money is all powerful." But let misers and cynics say what they will about love, being nothing but romantic nonsense. In spite of them all, I shall still maintain there is such a thing as true love. I know it—I feel it. (*rises*

Enter SALLY SMART, L. C. E.

Sally. Me too.

Ada. What do you mean, Sally?

Sally. Oh nothing at all, Miss Ada, just talking to myself, that's all. I came to tell you that Mr. Charles Melrose wishes to see you.

Ada. Does he know I'm in, Sally?

Sally. I don't think so, Miss, unless he peeped through the key-hole.

Ada. Oh, I'm sure he wouldn't do that. Do you think that mother saw him coming?

Sally. No Miss, I don't think as how she did. She's taking her afternoon's nap, and unless she sleeps like a jack rabbit, with her eyes open, she couldn't see him.

Ada. So much the better. She has no particular love for him, and I hope he may escape her watchful eye this time. Sally, show him in.

Sally. (*starts to go*) You bet your life.

Ada. Stay a moment, Sally, I have a favor to ask of you.

Sally. I ain't got a cent, Miss.

Ada. (*laughs*) Oh, I'm not going to borrow anything of you. I only wish to ask you to try and give up the use of vulgar slang.

Sally. You bet your boots I will! (*exit* C. E.

Ada. Bet your boots! What horrible language that girl makes use of, but with all her faults, Sally is a good and useful servant. And the reason mother tolerates her is, because she well knows she couldn't get anyone else to do as much work for so small a salary.

Enter SALLY *and* CHARLES MELROSE, C. E.

Charles. (*embraces* ADA) Ada, darling.

Sally. Yum—yum, my sugar plum.

Ada. Sally, leave the room.

Sally. Oh, I tumble, two is company and three is a crowd; but you needn't mind me, Miss, I wouldn't give you away for the world, for I've been there myself many a time. (*exit* L. E.

Charles. Well Ada, I am delighted to find you in at last. I've called so often only to find you out, that I almost despaired of ever seeing you again. To catch you at home is a rare and a welcome treat.

Ada. Pressing business must plead my excuse; and besides I've been very much engaged for some time past.

Charles. Yes, you've been engaged to me for some time past, and consequently, I imagined that I ought to have had some of your time.

Ada. Be seated (*points to sofa*) and I'll explain.

Charles. (*sits on sofa*) Certainly. (ADA *sits on chair at table*) Well Ada, this sofa can accommodate two. If you sit over there, I'll have to get a telephone to talk to you, distance doesn't lend enchantment to this view.

Ada. Oh well, as you wish. (*laughs and sits on sofa beside him*

Charles. Well dear, how is your respected, but obstinate mamma? Is she as much opposed to our marriage as ever? Does she show any signs of relenting yet?

Ada. None whatever; and for the present we must not think of marrying, as I fear she will never give her consent.

Charles. Then we must marry without it.

Ada. That's easier said than done. Mother is very sharp, and it would be impossible to outwit her.

Charles. Impossible! There is nothing impossible under the sun.

Ada. But if we should fail?

Charles. Fail! In the bright lexicon of lovers, there is no such word as fail, we must not think of it. Failure is a word invented by cowards, for cowards, brave men don't know the meaning of it. Love laughs at Locksmiths, and we shall laugh at your obstinate mamma. Let her do her worst, we shall defy her. Since she will not listen to reason, we must try strategem, we can elope; it's sensational and romantic.

Ada. I know it's romantic, but is it prudent?

Charles. Love and prudence don't always go together. It's a rare combination.

Ada. But is it the only alternative?

Charles. Elopement is the only alternative as far as I can see. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies. We must overcome

her obstinacy by our diplomacy. Your respected mamma has had altogether too much of her own way in the past. She rules this house-hold with an iron hand.

Ada. Quite true, you see mother is a woman of mind.

Charles. Yes, and she takes a positive delight in letting other people know that she has a mind, and a very disagreeable one at that. For my part, I have the greatest respect and admiration for woman in her proper sphere. I love to think of her as a ministering angel on earth, and worship her as such, but when she becomes a domestic tyrant with the temper of a devil—

Mrs. Muddle. (*heard calling off* R. E.) Sally! Sally!

Ada. (*rises and crosses to* R. C.) She's coming.

Enter SALLY L. 3 E. *and crosses to* R. 3 E.

Sally. You bet she's coming. Look out for the locomotive!

(*exit* R. 3 E.

Charles. (*rises*) Oh well, let her come. I am not afraid to beard the lioness in her den.

Ada. For my sake, Charles, do not aggravate her, but try and humor her.

Charles. Well, I'll try, and if at first I don't succeed, I shall not try again. I don't believe in humoring people, it's very much like spoiling children, and we all know the result in such cases.

Enter MRS. MUDDLE, R. 3 E., *comes* C.

Mrs. M. So Mr. Melrose, notwithstanding my positive orders, and against my expressed wishes, you again dare to intrude yourself in my house. Why is this?

Charles. I shall gladly explain the why and the wherefore, Madam, if you'll hear me patiently to the end.

Mrs. M. I understand, sir, you are paying your addresses to my daughter?

Charles. So I understand, Madam. I own to the soft impeachment, but I offer as an excuse, the love I bear your daughter.

Mrs. M. Love, bah! Don't talk to me of love.

Charles. Oh, I am not talking to you of love; I am just talking to myself. I suppose you won't object to that?

Mrs. M. Enough, sir! You must resign all pretensions to her hand, in plainer words, you must give her up.

Charles. I'm not so sure about that—I must first consult her as for me, my only answer to that is, "I would not if I could, and I could not if I would."

Mrs. M. And my answer to such sentimental rubbish is, to remind you once for all, that this is my house, and your presence here is obnoxious to me. And moreover, I must remind you, that in the future you must discontinue your clandestine visits to my daughter. Our interview is now at an end.

Ada. But mamma—

Mrs. M. Not a word, disobedient girl! (*to* CHARLES *Young man, you see the door?* *points to door* C.

Charles. I do, Madam. I saw it as I came in.

Mrs. M. You'll see it again as you go out.

Charles. It is a very nice door; I like the panels very much in-

deed; it is large, convenient and easy to open, in fact, it is everything that a well regulated door ought to be. No family ought to be without one of that pattern.

Mrs. M. You will please leave this house immediately. If you are a gentleman you will not insult me by remaining here against my wishes.

Charles. I shall certainly relieve you of my presence. I have no wish to intrude nor offend, but Madam, you need not imagine you can extinguish the passion of love by parting us. Separation will but add fuel to the flame. The old proverb about absence making the heart grow fonder, is true in our case, but I must not stand upon the order of my going, but go at once. (*starts toward* C. E.) Goodbye my dear Ada.

Mrs. M. By what right, sir, do you call my daughter your dear Ada?

Ada. Because, mother, I have given him the right. (*goes to* CHARLES) I've promised to become his wife.

Mrs. M. Girl! do you dare to disobey me?

Ada. (*crosses* C.) Yes I dare, when you demand what is unreasonable. I am your daughter, but not your slave, and when you ask me to give up the man of my choice, I simply tell you I will not do it!

Mrs. M. (*near chair* R.) Oh, this is too much, unnatural, disobedient child, you have broken my heart. (SALLY *appears at* R. 3 E. I'm going to faint, I know I am oh, oh! (*falls into chair*

Enter SALLY, R. 3 E. *with a glass of water, offers it to* MRS. MUDDLE.

Sally. Here you are, Missus.

Mrs. M. What's that for?

Sally. I heard you say you was going to faint and I fetched you a glass of water.

Mrs. M. Take it away, I don't want water.

Sally. (*goes to* R. E. *-aside*) She don't want water, she wants Old Tom Gin. The next time she's going to faint, I'll let her faint Kindness is thrown away on some folks. (*exit* R. E.

Mrs. M. (*rises and crosses* C. *to* CHARLES) Young man, I shall give you just five minutes to leave this house. If you are not gone by that time, I shall have the servants eject you. (*goes* R. C.) And as for you, Miss, I insist upon you breaking off your engagement with this young man, as I myself have already chosen a husband for you. (SALLY *appears in* R. E.

Ada. And may I ask, mother, who is the happy man you have chosen for my future lord and master.

Mrs. M. That good and worthy man, Deacon Jeremiah Spyder. (ADA *laughs and goes to* R. *corner*, SALLY *screams with laughter and dodges back quickly* MRS. MUDDLE *goes to* R. E.) I'll discharge that impudent hussy for daring to laugh at me. (*exit* R. E., *quickly*

Charles. (*goes to* C.) Well Ada, what do you think of your prospective husband, Deacon Jeremiah Spyder? (*laughs*) Ha, ha, ha!

Ada. If you say much more about him, I'll marry him just out of spite. He's neither very young nor handsome, 'tis true, but I presume he's as good as the average man. They are all pretty much alike.

Charles. (L. C.) Present company always excepted, of course.

But there, dear, I won't tease you any more about him. Let us kiss and make up before we part forever.

Ada. Oh, not forever, Charles! I am sure you don't mean that.

Charles. Not unless you wish it. I shall disregard your mother's commands, unless you yourself pronounce the sentence of banishment for life.

Ada. Which I shall never do. As a merciful judge, I discharge you. You are free to go, and I only wish I were free to go with you.

Charles. Let us hope that you soon shall be. Now if your step-father, Jasper Jay Muddle, had only the moral courage to revolt against this petticoat tyranny, he might be able to give us valuable assistance, but alas! poor unfortunate hen-pecked mortal, he is afraid to call his soul his own.

Ada. But step-father has given us his moral assistance.

Charles. That's not a drop in the bucket, against your mamma's physical resistance.

Ada. He has given his consent to our union, and though his word has not much weight with mamma, still it's one point gained. My step-father may have his faults, but he's a good man at heart. We can't all be perfect.

Charles. That's quite true.

Muddle. (*heard off* R.) Sally, who's been opening oysters with my razor?

Enter JASPER JAY MUDDLE R. 3 E., *with a razor and strop.*

Ah! Charles, how are you? Glad to see you. You are welcome to our house.

Charles. Thanks, Mr. Muddle, I know you mean it; but your wife gave me a far different kind of a reception only a short time ago.

Muddle. (*sits at table*) Chilly, eh? (*places razor and strop on table*

Charles. (*sits on sofa*) Chilly? It was extremely frigid, away below zero. The atmosphere at the North Pole was a summer's sun compared to it.

Ada. Yes indeed, papa. (*goes to* L. *of* MUDDLE *and kneels on hassock beside him*) She even went so far as to forbid our marriage, and she actually ordered Charles out of the house. Now what do you think?

Muddle. Think, my dear, I don't think at all. What's the use? Ever since I married your respected mamma, I've given up thinking, with the profound conviction that all is vanity and vexation of spirit here below. I am supposed to be the head of this house, but in reality, I am only the foot, and not a very large foot at that.

Ada. Oh papa, if you only had a will of your own.

Muddle. My dear, I shall make one before I die.

Ada. I don't mean that kind of a will, I mean—

Charles. She means more ginger.

Muddle. Jamaica ginger?

Ada. No, I mean more force of character.

Charles. Yes, what philosphers call moral stamina, commonly called grit, sand, pluck, nerve or courage.

Muddle. Yes, I understand, and like money, it's a good thing to have when you've got it, but when you haven't got it, you must do without it. Of course, if my wife objects to the marriage, I can't

help it, though she didn't object to her own. But then, she's a very peculiar kind of woman. She's one woman out of a thousand, and sometimes I wish I had married the other 999, and had left my present wife, like the "Last Rose of Summer," to bloom alone. But I've done all I could to make two loving hearts happy. I've given you my consent and blessing.

Ada. But what's the good of that?

Muddle. What! my blessing?

Ada. No, I mean your consent, if mother withholds hers.

Charles. It's another case of the house divided against itself Remember the old maxim, Mr. Muddle.

Muddle. Yes, I remember it. I have moral maxims enough in stock to start a Sunday school. The trouble is I can't carry any of them out. And I'm perfectly satisfied in my own mind, that for me there's only one way out of the whole business.

Ada. What is that?

Muddle. Suicide! (CHARLES *and* ADA *rise.*

Ada. (*goes* L. C.) Suicide!

Enter SALLY R. C. E. *with telegram, in time to hear last speech.*

Sally. Oh Lord! who's going to commit suicide?

Muddle. Nobody.

Sally. Then he won't be missed. Here's a telegram that came by telegraph.

Charles. (*crosses* C.) Who's it for, Sally?

Sally. (*comes* C.) There's forty cents charges on it.

Charles. Then I hope it's not for me. (*goes to* L. *corner*

Sally. No sir, it's for Jasper Jay Muddle.

Muddle. (*aside to* SALLY) Sally, has Mrs. Muddle seen this telegram?

Sally. No sir, unless she saw it coming over the wires.

Muddle. Good! Sally, (*gives her money*) here's a half a dollar and you can keep the change. (*opens telegram, drops envelope on floor*

Sally. (*goes* C.) All right, sir. I'll blow it on chewing gum.

(*exit* L. C. E.

Muddle. (*reads telegram*) Good news.

Ada. Indeed! what is it?

Muddle. An old friend of mine, Phineas Dabbler is coming to pay us a visit. He's got a week's vacation, so I suppose he's coming to spend it here in the country with us.

Charles. Phineas Dabbles, the inventor? They say he's a little eccentric, but they say that about all self-made men. I understand he's quite a genius with an original turn of mind.

Ada. (C.) Yes, but he has also the reputation of being eccentric, in fact he's called by some, a regular crank, and perhaps mother may object to his presence in this house.

Muddle. That's so, I never thought of that. She does not know who Dabbler is, and she may not want to know who Dabbler is. I must break it to her as gently as possible.

Charles. Mr. Muddle, your wife gave me just five minutes to leave the house, and as I have remained beyond the limit now, I'd better be going. Ada will you accompany me as far as the gate.

(*crosses* C.

Ada. I can see him as far as the gate, papa, can I not?

Muddle. (*rises*) Why certainly, my dear, see him as far as the gate, but don't take the gate along with you.

Ada. Come along, Charles. (*exit* R. E.

Charles. Good-day Mr. Muddle. (*shakes hands*

Muddle. Good-day, Charles. I hope you'll be happier with the daughter than I've been with the mother.

Charles. (*laughs*) I hope so, Mr. Muddle, but as you know marriage is a lottery, and we can't all draw prizes.

Ada. (*heard off* R. C. E.) Are you coming, Charles?

Charles. Yes, I'm coming. (*to* MUDDLE) So long Mr. Muddle. (*exit* R. E.

Muddle. He said marriage was a lottery. In some states lotteries are against the law. If that be so, marriages ought to be against the law also, and I may have committed a states prison offense in getting married. She accompanies him as far as the gate. Love's young dream. Alas, how often have I seen the present Mrs. Muddle as far as the gate. (*sits* R.) Ah! those happy by-gone days, when I used to sit on the gate of an evening and swing myself to and fro, and when I think of that time and now of this, I deeply regret, that while I was swinging, I didn't swing myself into eternity and end my miserable existence then and there. (*looks at telegram*) Now I shall read this telegram in full, for no doubt Dabbler was full when he sent it. (*reads*) "I am coming to spend my vacation with you. Your favorite pet dog, Fannie accompanies me. Mums the word. Eternal vigilance the watch word. DABBLER." Fannie is a beautiful Irish setter dog, to which my ex-wife was warmly attached, so much so that I called the dog Fannie, the same name as my former wife. She loved dogs just as much as my present wife hates them; and so when I married my second wife, I had to give poor Fannie away to Dabbler, knowing that he would take good care of her. (*places telegram on table*

Enter DEACON SPYDER, R. E., *stops and listens, unobserved by* MUDDLE

Well I'm glad that Fannie is coming here—though under no circumstances must my wife know anything about it. She is of such a jealous disposition, she can't even tolerate the name of Fannie. If she knew it the devil would be to pay.

Deacon. (*aside*) What horrible plot is this I hear? Fannie, his divorced wife coming to this neighborhood. I shall hide and listen. (*conceals himself behind screen*

Muddle. (*looks at watch*) Well I suppose Dabbler will come from the city by the 2:30 p. m. train. I guess I'd better meet him at the depot, and at the same time find some place in the neighborhood where we can conceal Fannie; thus I can kill two birds with one stone. (*exit* R. E.

Deacon. (*comes from behind screen*) Oh, the monster of iniqnity is about to bring his first wife, Fannie, into this neighborhood. I feel it my duty as a christian man, to inform the present Mrs. Muddle, of this outrageous conduct on the part of her wicked husband. Oh, the depravity of human nature is shocking.

Enter SALLY, L. E., *in time to hear the word "shocking," unseen by* DEACON, *who is* R. C., *sees telegram on table.*

Ah! this is the very telegram, the proof of his perfidy. I feel it my duty as a christian man to keep this telegram.

Sally. (*aside*) The first time I've ever heard it was a christian duty to steal other folks property.

Deacon. I'll expose the infamy of her worthless husband; I'll show him up in his true character of a scoundrel. (*turns, sees* SALLY

Deacon. Ah, friend Sally, I hope I see you well.

Sally. I guess you can see me well enough, if you ain't blind. I take notice you see other things that don't belong to you.

Deacon. Don't be too harsh, friend Sally. Remember that a soft answer turneth away wrath.

Sally. If you don't want a soft answer, don't ask a soft question. Remember that. (*aside*) That old hypocrite makes me sick.

(*sits on sofa*

Deacon. (*sits at table*) Ah, friend Sally, this is a wicked world.

Sally. The people that are in it make it so, and what are you going to do about it?

Deacon. Reform mankind.

Sally. (*jumps up*) A good idea! A capital idea. Suppose you commence on yourself.

Deacon. Ah, friend Sally, this levity is unbecoming there are more people in the world than I. (*sits*

Sally. Perhaps so, but most of them are in states prison.

Deacon. Verily this is a perverse generation; it's a world of sin and temptation, trial and tribulation. Oh, the depravity of human nature.

Sally. (*half aside, imitates him*) Oh, you make me tired.

Deacon. What did you remark, friend Sally?

Sally. I said you spoke like one inspired.

Deacon. In the midst of life we are in death. Now friend, Sally, take the advice of one who has your spiritual welfare at heart, and flee from the wrath to come! flee from it!

Sally. (*rises, indignantly*) Don't talk to me about fleas. Now see here, Deacon Spyder, I ain't as well posted in Scripture and book-learning as you are; but I once heard of a man who got very rich by minding his own business. I know some people who preach so much about religion to others, they ain't got time to practice it themselves. There now, put that in your pipe and smoke it.

(*goes to* L. E.

Deacon. (*rises*) Verily you are a child of sin, you are treading the steep and narrow-path that leads to perdition.

Sally. Oh well, there are others, and you won't be very far behind me, Deacon Spyder. (*exit* L. E.

Deacon. Oh, the depravity of that young woman. I feel it my duty as a christian man, to place this telegram where Mrs. Muddle can easily find it.

Enter SALLY L. E., *hides behind screen.*

And thus I'll expose the perfidy of her sinful husband. I shall place it here (*lays telegram on table*) and (*goes* R. C.) when the opportune moment comes I shall find it.

Sally. (*looks out from behind screen, aside*) But I shall find it first

Deacon. Her worthless husband, Jasper Jay Muddle, takes every occasion to insult me; only the other day he called me a canting Pharisee. I shall have my revenge for that, and this is my golden opportunity. (*exit* R. 3 E.

Sally. (*comes from behind screen, picks up telegram*) No, it's mine; this is my trick. (*starts for* L. E.) Oh! the depravity of human nature. (*exit* L. E.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—Same as Act 1st.—DEACON SPYDER *discovered on sofa.*

Deacon. I wish that good and pious woman, Mrs. Jezabel Muddle were here now, while her worthless husband is absent, I'd have a good opportunity to expose him.

Enter MRS. MUDDLE, R. 3 E.

Mrs. Muddle. Good-day, Deacon Spyder.

Deacon. (*rises*) Good day, Mrs. Muddle, I hope I see you well?

Mrs. M. As well as could be expected under the circumstances, Deacon. Be seated. (*sits* L. *of table*

Deacon. (*sits on sofa*) You have my heartfelt sympathy, Mrs. Muddle, and I can guess the cause of your present misery. I understand you are not happy in your married life?

Mrs. M. I confess I am not happy, and I've good cause. I fear my husband is a lost sheep. He is beyond my powers of reformation. Good advice is thrown away upon him, like chaff before the wind. His conduct has made me miserable. Marriage has been a failure in my case—I fear he has never forgotten his first wife, Fannie.

Deacon. But when you married him, you knew he was a divorced man?

Mrs. M. Quite true, but then I thought that even a divorced man was better than no man at all.

Deacon. But dear Jezabel, all this time I was pining in secret for you, I had you in my mind's eye.

Mrs. M. But how was I to know that, I am not a mind-reader.

Deacon. Quite true. The fault was mine, all mine. (*rises, crosses* C.) And now when I think of the priceless treasure I have lost, when I think of what might have been, I'm almost moved to tears. (*wipes eyes with handkerchief*) But as the poet beautifully expressed it, "'Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all." Where is your husband now, Mrs. Muddle?

Mrs. M. I'm sure I don't know.

Deacon. I think I can tell you. As I came up the walk, I saw him hastening in the direction of the depot.

Mrs. M. Towards the depot?

Deacon. Yes, are you expecting anybody?

Mrs. M. No.

Deacon. It's very strange. He seemed agitated, and I also happen

to know he received a telegram.

Mrs. M. He told me nothing of this.

Enter SALLY L. E. *—is seen listening behind screen.*

Deacon. It's my firm belief, Mrs. Muddle, that the telegram he received was from his divorced wife, Fannie.

Mrs. M. That woman again. (*rises*) If what you say is true, I shall quit his roof forever.

Deacon. And you will fly with me, your own Jeremiah Spyder.

Sally. (*aside*) Making love to the old woman! Oh, the depravity of human nature.

Mrs. M. (*drops into chair and weeps*) I am a most unhappy woman. Oh, oh, oh!

Deacon. Dear Jezabel, do not weep, he is not worthy of one of those pearly tears.

Mrs. M. (*rises*) You are right, he is not. I must not give way to such weakness. Oh, for a single proof of his perfidy.

Deacon. And you shall have it. By chance I saw him drop the telegram here, (*turns up stage to look for telegram*) and now I—I don't see it.

Sally. (*shows telegram from behind screen—aside*) It's another case of now you see it, and now you don't. This telegram is out of sight.

(*exit* L. E.

Deacon. It's very strange, I can't account for it. The wind must have blown it away. (*comes* C.) But to convince you that he did receive a telegram, here is the envelope.

(*picks up envelope* C., *near footlights, and hands it to* MRS. MUDDLE

Mrs. M. Oh, to be convinced of the truth.

Deacon. Verily, the truth is mighty and will prevail.

Mrs. M. When he returns I shall confront him with this, and if I find he's deceiving me, I shall leave his house forever.

(*drops in chair and weeps*

Deacon. And you would be serving him right, Mrs. Muddle. I will now bid you a very good day, dear Jezabel. (*up* C.) But keep an eye on your faithless husband. Man is desperately wicked and full of deceit. Oh, the depravity of human nature. (*turns to* C. E.

Enter SALLY C. E. *and collides with* DEACON *as she enters.*

Sally. Oh, get out of my way!

Deacon. Verily, young woman, you are a stumbling block in the path of the righteous. (*exit* C. E.

Sally. (*at* C. E. *looking after him*) Well, if I'm a stumbling-block, you're a block-head, you old snake in the grass. (*remains at* C. E.

Mrs. M. (*rises*) I shall first expose his villainy, and then renounce him forever. Sally, come here!

Sally. Yes, ma'am. (*comes* C.

Mrs. M. Sally, do you think you could tell the truth?

Sally. I think I could, ma'am, if I tried real hard.

Mrs. M. I know you are a good girl in some respects, but you have one great failing; there is no believing a single word that comes out of your head.

Sally. Oh, ma'am, how can you go and say such a thing as that? Oh, the depravity of human nature. (*weeps*

Mrs. M. There, there, stop your crying, only tell me the truth

this time, and I'll forgive you for the many lies you have told me in the past.

Sally. I will, ma'am, I'll tell you the truth this time, if I never tell it again in all my life. What do you want to know?

Mrs. M. I wish to know who brought a telegram to my husband?

Sally. If I tell you, you won't give me away, will you?

Mrs. M. No, I won't give you away as you call it, if you tell me the truth.

Sally. I'll tell you the truth, Missis, because I cannot tell a lie. It was old Deacon Spyder that brought it.

Mrs. M. Deacon Spyder! Are you sure of it?

Sally. Deacon Spyder was the last man I saw with the telegram in his hand.

Mrs. M. Oh, the deceit! the treachery of man!

Sally. That's what I say, ma'am; you can't trust the best man in the world; and I do think that every woman ought to have a card tied around her neck, with this motto in large letters, for the benefit of mankind. "Positively no trust."

Mrs. M. Sally, can you tell me where Mr. Muddle has gone?

Sally. Yes, ma'am, he's gone out.

Mrs. M. I know that as well as you, but where has he gone?

Sally. It's my opinion he has gone out of his mind, because I saw him running down the hill at a two minute gait.

Mrs. M. In the direction of the depot?

Sally. There are so many different directions to the depot, I couldn't say for certain.

Mrs. M. (*goes to* R. 3 E.) That will do, Sally. When Mr. Muddle returns, let me know immediately. I want to see him. (*exit* R. 3 E.

Sally. Yes, ma'am. Oh laws! but that was a whopping lie I told her about the telegram. Oh well, (*sits at table*) one might as well be hanged for stealing a sheep as a lamb. My motto is, "When you are bad, be desperately bad;" don't be milk-and-water bad, and "When you are good, be out and out good," don't be good for revenge only. When I die, I want either one of these epitaphs on my head-stone, "She was so bad, there could be nothing worse," or "She was so good, there could be nothing better." Now it's my opinion that old Deacon Spyder wants to make trouble in this family. (*rises*) But he shan't have all the fun to himself. I'll take a hand in it. (*goes to* L. C.) I'll give him rope enough to hang himself, and if he don't succeed, I'll lend him a helping hand, (*up stage* C.) and when I see things are going too far in the wrong direction, I'll cry halt!

Enter JASPER JAY MUDDLE, R. E.

Throw up your hands!

Muddle. Hello! Sally, what's the matter?

Sally. (*laughs, goes to sofa*) Oh sir! I didn't mean you.

Muddle. I should hope not. I thought it was a clear case of highway robbery.

Sally. No sir. I was just rehearsing a part I'm going to perform in a drama pretty soon.

Muddle. Then Sally, it must be "The life of Jesse James," I guess.

Sally. (*goes to* L. E.) No sir, I call it "The Deacon's Troubles, or The Missing Telegram." (*exit* L. E.

Muddle. Speaking of telegrams, that reminds me—(*feels in pockets*) I guess I must have dropped mine on the way to the depot. I was so excited about the dog, Fannie (*sits at table*

Enter SALLY, L. E.

Sally. Oh, sir, I was nearly forgetting to tell you that the Missis wanted to see you the very moment you come in.

Muddle. She does, eh? That looks bad. Sally, in what frame of mind is Mrs. Muddle at present?

Sally. Oh, sir! you should see the frame. She's in an awful rage about something. I don't know what it is.

Muddle. Neither does she. Sally, do you think she smells a rat?

Sally. I can't say whether it's a rat or a mouse, but I overheard Deacon Spyder tell her all about your having received a telegram, and a lot of other things too numerous to mention.

Muddle. Oh, the old scoundrel, how did he find that out?

Sally. I guess he must have been listening somewheres, and then he let the cat out of the bag. Here's your telegram, sir, I found it here in the room. (*hands telegram*

Muddle. (*takes telegram and puts it in rest pocket*) Do you think that my wife saw it?

Sally. No sir, I don't think as how she did, but that old Deacon Spyder showed her the envelope, and now I think she's dead on.

Muddle. Dead on! Dead on what, Sally?

Sally. Dead onto your little game about your first wife coming here to see you.

Muddle. My first wife coming here to see me! Girl, what the devil are you talking about? (*bell heard ring off* L.

Sally. (*goes to* L. E.) Mum's the word, I'll not give you away.

Muddle. (*goes to* L. C.) Not give me away—girl explain.

Sally. Hush! (*puts finger to her mouth*) Hush! (*exit* L. 3 E

Muddle. Well, I'll be—

Sally. (*puts head in at* L. 3 E., *quickly*) Hush! (*disappears*

Muddle. What does she mean by that mysterious hush. (*puts finger to his mouth*) There's no one sick in the house. "She was onto my little game about my first wife coming here." There's some horrible mystery here. Oh, I suppose it's some mistake, that will be cleared up bye-and-bye. (*goes to chair* R. *of table and sits*) My old friend Dabbler did not arrive by that train.

Enter MRS. MUDDLE, R. 3 E., *unobserved by* MR. MUDDLE.

There's another train due in half an hour. Well, I shall be right glad to see him and Fannie.

Mrs. M. Jasper Jay, where have you been?

Muddle. (*jumps up and crosses to* L.) Oh I—I have been out, my dear—yes, I've been out.

Mrs. M. Out! Out where, sir!

Muddle. Out everywhere! all over, my dear. You see the doctor told me to take long walks in the open air for the benefit of my health. He said it would build me up.

Mrs. M. And did he tell you to run to the depot to catch a train?

Muddle. No my dear, he said nothing about that. I don't think I could run fast enough to catch a train. I might catch a cold, but

I never could catch a train, especially after it had started. You see my dear

Mrs. M. Enough, sir! You are lying to me.

Muddle. (*aside*) I dare say it's second nature. I wonder how she found it out though.

Mrs. M. Jasper Jay, you have received a telegram?

Muddle. My dear Jezabel, I did not —

Mrs. M. (*shows envelope*) Sir!

Muddle. (*confused, stammers*) Ahem! I did not —do anything else but receive a telegram.

Mrs. M. You told me nothing of it, sir!

Muddle. Because there was nothing to tell. It was just a telegram from a friend, that's all.

Mrs. M. Jasper Jay, you had a motive?

Muddle. Yes, my dear, I had a motive and a good one. You see, as you are subject to heart failure, I thought that the sight of a telegram might produce nervous prostration and end fatally. You see, I considered your health, my dear.

Mrs. M. Jasper Jay, you are a prevaricator.

Muddle. No, my dear, I'm a democrat.

Mrs. M. You are a two-faced monster, that's what you are!

Muddle. A two-faced monster, eh! Then I ought to get a position in a dime museum as a freak. (*laughs*) Ha, ha, ha!

Mrs. M. Throw off this mask of hypocricy and show yourself in your true colors.

Muddle. My dear, I never wore a mask in all my life, except a base-ball mask once.

Mrs. M. Enough, sir! Since I cannot believe you, I must satisfy myself, I shall search you

Muddle. (*aside, goes* R.) Oh, Lord, she musn't find this telegram. (*hides it up left sleeve*

Mrs. M. Turn around here, sir, and throw up your hands.

Muddle. (*throws up both hands*) But my dear, this is a clear case of highway robbery.

Enter SALLY, L. E. —*pantomime business with* MUDDLE, *gets back of him and takes telegram out of sleeve, unseen by* MRS. MUDDLE, *and then exits* L. E.

(*aside*) The country is saved.

Mrs. M. (*finds poker chips in* R. *vest pocket*) What do you call these, sir?

Muddle. (*aside*) What the devil shall I tell her they are? (*aloud*) My dear, these are a new kind of throat lozenge I'm taking for my cold.

Mrs. M. I'll soon find out, I shall swallow one.

Muddle. (*aside*) If she does, she'll never live to swallow another. (*aloud*) My dear, I shouldn't advise you, too, they are not to be taken internally, except in dangerous cases like mine

Mrs. M. (*places poker chips on table*) Jasper Jay, you have destroyed that mysterious telegram.

Muddle. I pledge you my word of honor as a gentleman, my dear Jezabel, that I have not. It's quite true that I did receive a telegram. (*aside*) I musn't give Sally away. (*aloud*) I can only tell you under oath that I haven't got it now.

Mrs. M. Why so much mystery? From whom did you receive it?

Muddle. From a scientific friend of mine, Phineas Dabbler, whom I am sure you'll be glad to meet. (*crosses* L.) He's coming to spend his vacation with us. He's a regular genius with quite an original turn of mind. He is what they call a specialist, an aurist; he has made the ear a special branch of study.

Mrs. M. I am glad to hear this, he may be of service to me. I've had another severe attack of the earache. Probably he may be able to understand my case and treat me. (*goes to* R. E.

Muddle. Oh, he'll treat you. Dabbler is a great man for treating people. (*aside*) I've seen him treat a whole crowd at a bar.

Mrs. M. (*at* R. E.) By the way, is this friend of yours addicted to the use of strong liquor?

Muddle. My dear, I never saw him drink anything stronger than red lemonade at a circus.

Mrs. M. Very well, if this gentleman is the model man you represent him, he shall enjoy the hospitality of my house during his vacation. I'll have the spare-room prepared for him at once.

(*exit* R. E.

Muddle. (*sits at table, laughs*) Model man indeed! If she only knew the whole truth, but then she may know it soon enough; perhaps too soon for my happiness. She'll be sure to find it out and then, oh how I'll catch it. Sally saved me by coming in the nick of time. She's a very useful servant, that girl. I don't know how we could get along without her. Confound that telegram! I wish I had burned it in the first place, or in the fire-place. I wouldn't so much mind only for that sentence in it about Fannie's coming here. My present wife hates dogs, especially if she found out that it belonged to my divorced wife, then there would be trouble in the family. She's a very peculiar woman, there are few like her in the world, and so much the better for the world, say I. (*bell heard off* C. —MUDDLE *jumps up*) I wouldn't be surprised if that was Dabbler now. I must tell him how I lied to my wife about him, and warn him to be on his good behaviour during his stay here; otherwise he may get me into hot water of the hotest degree of hotness.

Enter SALLY, C. E.

Sally. A person to see you, sir!

Muddle. A person! Is he a gentleman, Sally?

Sally. He might be a gentleman, sir, or he might be a tramp, you can't always sometimes tell, but he's an awful funny looking man.

Muddle. Didn't he have a card?

Sally. I asked him to give me his name, and he told me he would never give any woman his name until she became his wife.

Muddle. It might be a tenant for the house next door.

Sally. Oh laws—no sir! I'm sure he ain't no tenant, he looks more like a lunatic than a tenant. Here's your telegram, sir.

(*hands him telegram*

Muddle. Thanks, Sally, you saved my life that time.

Sally. Don't loose it again, sir.

Muddle. What, my life?

Sally. No, the telegram.

Muddle. I'll try not to, Sally; now show the gentleman in.

Sally. All right, sir. (*exit* C. E.

Muddle. I hope it may be a tenant for my house next door. I thought I would speculate and so I rented the cottage next door for the summer season. I've been done up by one tenant already; he did not pay in advance, nor at any time afterwards. He lived six weeks in my house, and when I summoned up courage to ask him for my rent, he dropped dead of heart disease on the spot. I had to bury him at my own expense. The coroner's jury brought in a verdict that I was the secondary cause of his death, by asking him so suddenly for the rent. I must be more careful in the future, as to my tenants. Another tenant with heart disease like that, would completely bankrupt me.

Enter SALLY, C. E., *followed by* PHINEAS DABBLER, *who hands hat and coat to* SALLY, *then shakes hands with* MUDDLE *exit* SALLY, C. E.

Dabbler. And how is my old friend, Jasper Jay Muddle?

Muddle. Ah! delighted to see you, Phineas, old boy, delighted to see you!

Dabbler. And so you are married again, eh? I wish you joy.

Muddle. Don't wish me anything until you know all.

Dabbler. Oh, very well, just as you say—everything goes.

Muddle. Be seated. Tell me what have you done with the dog Fannie? *(sits R. of table*

Dabbler. (*sits L. of table*) Oh, she's all right. I received your note from the Station Agent, telling me not to bring her here to the house under any circumstances, so I left her with the Agent at the depot, with instructions to take the best of care of her until I call for her. And in order to make assurance doubly sure, I've put a muzzle on her, and placed her in a cage; so she'll be well cared for there until I can find more comfortable quarters for her. It's really too bad though that the poor animal should be so cruelly imprisoned. The dog-catchers are on the war-path, endeavoring to earn an honest living, by stealing other people's property. About this season of the year the dog-catchers business is picking up, so to speak.

Muddle. Dabbler, my reason for not having Fannie brought here is, my present wife has a horror of dogs. When she was young some time during the past century, she was bitten by a mad dog, and now sometimes she exhibits symptoms of hydrophobia. She gets awful mad at times.

Dabbler. That's too bad, really too bad, but then I can fix that all right if you'll allow me. I've also heard that your present wife has a terrible temper.

Muddle. Alas! you've heard the truth.

Dabbler. Too bad, but I'll fix that all right. I suppose you have heard of my wonderful discovery?

Muddle. No.

Dabbler. No, then unprogressive mortal, you're behind. You know, at least, there is such a thing in human nature as "The Milk of Human Kindness?"

Muddle. Yes, most certainly.

Dabbler. Well sir, I've made a wonderful discovery. It far eclipses the X Ray idea, of photography through opaque substances. I have discovered a process by which I can manufacture an exact substitute in every particular of the Milk of Human Kindness, I call it "My Concentrated Essence of The Milk of Human Kindness."

Muddle. (*laughs*) "The Concentrated Essence of The Milk of Human Kindness!" You mean "The Concentrated Essence of Human Nonsense."

Dabbler. (*rises and goes* L.) That's right, laugh away. Laughter and ridicule has been the only reward of every inventor and discoverer from Columbus down to your humble servant. But my wonderful discovery is bound to succeed in the end, in spite of laughter and ridicule.

Muddle. What is the nature of your wonderful medicine?

Dabbler. It's a sure cure for an irritable temper, so common to the female sex, especially amongst married women.

Muddle. What do you intend doing with it?

Dabbler. I'm a philanthropist. I intend throwing it upon the market at a ridiculously low price, for the benefit of all hen-pecked husbands.

Muddle. There ought to be a wide field in this country for such a medicine.

Dabbler. Of course there ought. It will supply a long felt want, and is just suited to the present age, when the New Woman bosses the old man. I confidently expect that when the virtues of my wonderful medicine become widely known, there will be such a rush of hen-pecked husbands to purchase it, that I fear my Laboratory will not be able to supply the market.

Muddle. Tell me how is your medicine administered, and how does it effect or operate upon the patient?

Dabbler. Oh, it can be administered externally, or internally and eternally, if the patient lives long enough. But it is safer to administer it hypodermically, or through any of the natural channels of the human body, especially through the medium of the ear, thus it reaches the brain by a direct route, so to speak, and puts the patient in a cataleptic sleep, or in a state of suspended animation, or commonly called a trance.

Muddle. Truly wonderful! During this state of suspended animation, or trance, is the patient conscious of his or her surroundings?

Dabbler. No, sir; you might run a freight train across the bridge of her nose and she wouldn't even wink.

Muddle. How long do they remain in this state of trance?

Dabbler. As long or as short as you desire, according to the size of the dose.

Muddle. Yes, but can you restore the patient to consciousness when you like?

Dabbler. Oh, most certainly, providing they are not given an overdose. The regular dose for an adult being four drops. In case of an accident, such as the patient getting an overdose, I always have an antidote.

Muddle. An antidote?

Dabbler. Oh, yes, in fact, I never go without it.

Muddle. Have you got it with you now?

Dabbler. Yes, it's in the pocket of my overcoat which is hanging in the hall.

Muddle. (*rises, goes to* C.) Dabbler, come here. (DABBLER *goes to* MUDDLE) Now my wife has a terrible temper. I will give you a chance to try your wonderful medicine upon her, and this is a splendid chance. I have told her that you were an ear-specialist; she is at present suffering from an ear-ache, and under the pretence

of curing it, you can put her in a trance. The cellar is full of good old wine, and we'll have a glorious time; besides you'll earn my eternal gratitude.

Dabbler. A capital idea. I shall certainly try the experiment upon her. Consider it as good as done; for twelve hours your wife will be in the land of dreams.

Muddle. She keeps the key of the wine-cellar, but while she's in the trance, we can steal it. I haven't had a right royal time in seven years, but now we can enjoy ourselves to our heart's content. At the first opportunity I shall ask her to come in here and then--

Dabbler. Leave the rest to me. But there is one thing absolutely necessary for the success of our plans, and that is, that after having put your wife under the influence of this narcotic, she must be kept in a cool place, if possible, on ice.

Muddle. On ice? She may freeze up.

Dabbler. Then we'll have to thaw her out again. Let me explain, so you will understand. My theory is based on reason and common sense. An irritable temper in the individual is caused by the acrid humors in the system; congeal these acrid humors by this refrigerating process, and my wonderful medicine gets in its mollifying work, a transmitation takes place in the system. My Concentrated Essence of The Milk of Human Kindness takes the place of the acrid humors, and when the woman wakes up, you have an angel on earth.

Muddle. But suppose, through some accident, she don't wake up?

Dabbler. In that case there'll be a new face in Heaven.

Muddle. I am anxious to see this wonderful medicine of yours.

Dabbler. You shall see it. I always carry a small sample with me in case of emergency, and for the exclusive benefit of hen-pecked husbands. It's in my overcoat pocket in the hall outside, I shall go and bring it here at once. (*exit* C. E.

Enter MRS. MUDDLE, R. E.—*remains in entrance and listens, unseen by* MUDDLE.

Muddle. (L. C.) Truly wonders will never cease. Now if my wife can only be placed under the influence of this wonderful drug, it will be a splendid idea. The cellar is full of good wine, and by this time it must be in excellent condition, and while my wife is in the trance, we won't do a thing but enjoy ourselves. I have often been tempted to set the house on fire just to get into that wine cellar. Speaking of setting things on fire, reminds me I'd better destroy this telegram while I think of it and before my wife finds it, the contents would certainly get me into very hot water.

(*takes telegram and strikes match, has back turned towards* R.

Mrs. M. (*comes* C.) Jasper Jay!

Muddle. (*hides telegram behind back - business ad. lib.*) Yes, my dear. (*a forced laugh*) Oh, how you startled me!

Mrs. M. What is that you are hiding behind your back?

Muddle. Oh, it's only a piece of fly-paper, my dear.

Mrs. M. Let me see it, sir!

Muddle. I wouldn't advise you to, my dear, this fly-paper is of a very affectionate nature.

Mrs. M. What do you mean by saying that it's of an affectionate nature?

Muddle. It may get stuck on you, my dear. (*laughs heartily*) It affords me great amusement to laugh at my own jokes. It tickles me almost to death. (*laughs*) Ha, ha, ha!

Mrs. M. No more falsehoods, sir! Give me that telegram!

Muddle. I will my dear, but if any evil consequences spring from it, don't blame me—there you are. (*hands her telegram—in* L. *corner*

Mrs. M. (*reads telegram*) "Fanny accompanies me—mum's the word." (*to* MUDDLE) Oh, you deceatful lying monster! My suspicions are only too true! She is here!

Muddle. Of course she is, but you need not be alarmed, she's perfectly harmless. We've put her in a cage.

Mrs. M. In a cage?

Muddle. Yes, my dear, and put a muzzle on her so that she can't bite.

Mrs. M. Then you love her still?

Muddle. Of course I do.

Mrs. M. Oh, you vile, faithless wretch!

Muddle. Now my dear, (*approaches* MRS. MUDDLE) if you'll only allow me, I think I can throw some light upon this subject.

Mrs. M. You cannot throw any light upon it.

Muddle. Then forever remain in darkness.

Mrs. M. I know all.

Muddle. You do? Then what's the use of me knowing anything.

(*goes to* L. *corner*

Mrs. M. Since you have proved false to me, go back to her, and never let me look upon your face again. I am a cruelly wronged and broken-hearted woman. Oh, oh, oh!

(*weeps, drops in chair* L. *of table*

Enter ADA *and* CHARLES, C. E., SALLY R. E. *and* DABBLER L. E.

Omnes. What's the matter?

Muddle. My wife has fainted.

Dabbler. I can bring her too. (*business at table*) One drop of my Universal Infallible Restorative—

Ada. Sally, run for a doctor. (SALLY *goes to* C. E. *quickly*

Enter DEACON SPYDER, C. E., *collides with* SALLY *as he enters*—SALLY *hits his hat, playing cards fall out, etc.*

Sally. Oh, get out of my way!

QUICK CURTAIN.

Position of characters as curtain drops—MRS. MUDDLE *in chair* L. *of table,* ADA *beside her,* CHARLES *at* R. *corner,* MUDDLE *at* L. *corner,* DABBLER L. *of table,* SALLY *and* DEACON SPYDER *at* C. E.

ACT III.

SCENE.—Same as Act 1st. with a call bell on table.

Enter JASPER JAY MUDDLE, L. E. *as curtain rises, sits* R. *of table.*

Muddle. There's no use talking, if this excitement continues much longer, I shall be either a raving maniac or a gibbering idiot. I have come to the conclusion that marriage is a failure and life's

not worth living. My wife has got a bee in her bonnet about that telegram and she won't listen to reason. (*rises and crosses to* L.

Enter MRS. MUDDLE, R. E., *unseen by* MUDDLE.

If ever I selet a wife again, I shall go to a deaf and dumb asylum for one, then I shall have some peace of mind. I won't be talked to death anyhow. (*about to sit at table*

Mrs. M. (*comes* C.) Jasper Jay!

Muddle. (*jumps up*) Yes, my dear.

Mrs. M. So you are going to select your next wife from a deaf and dumb asylum, eh?

Muddle. My dear, I was only speaking figuratively, you know I'm something of a poet.

Mrs. M. (*sits* R. *of table*) Jasper Jay, you're a fool!

Muddle. Well, you've made me what I am you often tell me that. (*sits* L. *of table*

Mrs. M. When I married you, you were nobody—

Muddle. And I've held my own ever since.

Mrs. M. I married you with the hope of reforming you, but I find you are incorrigible and hopelessly depraved, you have not yet reformed.

Muddle. 'Tis never too late to mend. I'll get there in the sweet bye-and-bye. "While the lamp holds out to burn." The vilest sinner—

Mrs. M. Silence, sir! Only the other night a policeman found you in a beastly state of intoxication hugging a telephone pole.

Muddle. Surely my dear, you're not jealous of a telephone pole. (*laughs*

Mrs. M. Jasper Jay, this is no laughing matter. I have also learned that you have presumed to give your consent to my daughter's union with a young man who is in every way objectionable to me.

Muddle. Quite true my dear. I gave my consent and also my blessing.

Mrs. M. And without even consulting me, sir?

Muddle. I did not think it a case for consultation, my dear.

Mrs. M. And so you gave your consent and blessing?

Muddle. Yes, I happened to have a blessing about me to spare, so I thought they might as well share the benefit of it.

Mrs. M. Jasper Jay, your blessing will prove a curse.

Muddle. Well, they've got it, let them make the best of it. What's done, can't be undone.

Mrs. M. Ada is only your step-daughter. She is my child and I have other plans for her future happiness. Were you not aware of that?

Muddle. No, my dear, I was not, and furthermore I could not conceive on what grounds the present young man was objectionable to you?

Mrs. M. Grounds, sir?

Muddle. That's what I said.

Mrs. M. You speak of my child as if she were so much unstrained coffee.

Muddle. (*rises and comes down*) My dear, I never said a single word about coffee grounds. You misunderstand me, and since we agree

only to disagree, we had better drop the subject entirely. You may marry her to any man you like, and as many men as you like, it's a matter of the most perfect indifference to me. (*sits at table again*

Mrs. M. Oh, you monster, I do believe you'd encourage bigamy and polygamy.

Muddle. Yes, my dear, everything goes if you say so. I have no voice in the matter. This whole business will bring my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Mrs. M. My daughter shall profit by my sad matrimonial experience. I'll take good care, that if I have made a fatal mistake in my marriage, she shall not.

Muddle. (*rises and goes to* R. *of table*) My dear, you are in the habit of frequently alluding to marriage with me as a fatal mistake. Now allow me to remark that your first husband was –

Mrs. M. (*rises, indignantly*) A man, Jasper Jay, a man!

Muddle. Well I should hope he was a man. I didn't insinuate that he was a woman, did I? I was only going to say –

Mrs. M. Not a word against him, sir, he is dead.

(*sits at table again*

Muddle. (*sits at table again— aside*) Oh happy man, who could blame him for dying.

Mrs. M. And after the death of Reuben Ray, I married you Jasper Jay.

Muddle. He was a Reuben and I'm a Jay, a good pair to draw to, my dear. (*laughs*

Mrs. M. (*rises*) No levity, sir! I shall leave you (*starts toward* R. E.) now.

Muddle. (*aside*) Thank heaven!

Mrs. M. And I warn you, for the future, never dare to interfere in my domestic affairs again. (*at* R. E.) Jasper Jay, you are a wolf in sheep's clothing, a human vampire, a whited sepulchre.

(*exit* R. E.

Muddle. (*rises*) A human vampire! a whited sepulchre. (*goes to* R. *of table*) That's good, what next I wonder? (*rings bell on table*) I shouldn't be surprised if I turned out to be a family vault, or a cannibal of some kind. Oh, kind providence, turn back thy universe and give me single blessedness again just for to night.

(*sits* L. *of table*

Enter SALLY, L. E.

Sally. Did you ring for hot water, sir?

Muddle. No, Sally, I'm in hot water now. (*rises*) Sally, come over here, I wish to speak to you. (SALLY *crosses to* R.) Do you know you're a very pretty girl?

Sally. Oh, sir, you men are such flatterers that you'd say so even if you didn't think so.

Muddle. Yes, and you'd think so even if we didn't say so, eh, Sally?

Sally. Well, sir, us women must believe our looking glasses, they don't flatter us.

Muddle. The looking glass is the young woman's best companion. Sally, do you think you could keep a secret?

Sally. Well sir, I can try, and if I can't keep it, I can tell it to Sammy, he keeps all my secrets for me.

Muddle. Well, Sally, if I am missing one of these days, don't be surprised nor agitated, but search for my body at the bottom of the fish-pond at the lower end of the garden.

Enter DEACON SPYDER, R. E., *hides behind screen.*

Sally. Oh surely, sir, you wouldn't think of killing yourself?

Muddle. Sally, if I don't kill myself, I shall have to kill someone else.

Sally. Well, sir, if you must kill someone, why don't you kill old Deacon Spyder; he wouldn't be missed, and it's about time for him to die.

Deacon. (*from behind screen—aside*) Kill me! Oh, the depravity of that young woman!

Sally. It would be good riddance to bad rubbish.

Muddle. I have sometimes thought of that, but his time has not yet come.

Sally. I wish it would hurry up and get here.

Muddle. Rather let him live to suffer the remorse of conscience he cannot escape.

Sally. Well, I thought if someone would rid the world of him, it would be a great blessing. He's no use on earth, unless some farmer wanted a scare-crow.

Deacon. (*from behind screen—aside*) A scare-crow, oh!

Muddle. One last request, Sally, in case anything happens to me, don't let them bring in a verdict of insanity. I want you to swear that it was a case of justifiable suicide brought about by matrimonial misery.

Sally. All right, sir, I'll swear anything you ask me to, but I hate to think of you lying at the bottom of the fish-pond, and you catching your death of cold, and all the little fishes nibbling at your toes. (*puts handkerchief to eyes and weeps*

Muddle. Let them nibble, Sally, let them nibble. (*sits* R., *bell heard ring off* L.) Sally, see who that is and bring me word.

Sally. (*goes to* L. E.) I'm expecting a caller myself. (*exit* L. E.

Muddle. Perhaps it's Dabbler or a tenant for the house next door. It's a most extraordinary thing, but since the sudden and mysterious death of my former tenant, a report has gone abroad that the house next door is haunted, and it's becoming a white elephant on my hands. It will be very difficult to find a tenant to occupy it.

Enter SALLY, L. E.

Sally. Please, sir, it's Sammy Dobbs come after the situation.

Muddle. Oh, yes, sure enough, I advertised for a strong boy to do chores around the house. Show him up, Sally.

Sally. (*at* L. E.) Come in Sammy, the master wants to see you.

Enter SAMMY DOBBS, L. E.

(SALLY *aside to* SAMMY) Now speak up! Don't be scared—do yourself proud and you'll get the job.

Sammy. (*aside to* SALLY) Just watch me! (*aloud*) Mr. Muddle, sir, I've come after the job.

Muddle. So I see. Well, what can you do?

Sam. I can do everybody

Muddle. What's that?

Sally. (*interposing*) He said, sir, he could do anything in the way of honest labor.

Muddle. I suppose you don't object to work?

Sam. No sir! if it ain't too hard and too heavy.

Muddle. Your work will be light and your salary won't be heavy. What did you do in your last place?

Sam. I was breaking rock in a stone quarry.

Muddle. Indeed! where was your last situation?

Sam. In jail.

Muddle. (*rises*) What!

Sally. (*aside to* SAMMY) Oh, why did you say that? (*aloud to* MUDDLE) I'll tell you how it was, sir! It was this way: There was another fellow that looked like Sammy and they arrested Sammy, thinking it was him.

Muddle. I see it was a case of mistaken identity.

Sam. No sir, it was a case of lager beer that he stole.

Sally. But Sammy was innocent, indeed he was.

(*bell heard ring off* L.

Muddle. Sally, see who that is.

Sally. Yes, sir. (*aside to* SAMMY) Mind what you say. (*exit* L. E.

Muddle. Now young man, what wages do you expect?

Sam. As much as you'll give me.

Muddle. (*goes to* R. E.) Well, I shan't settle on any certain figure until my wife sees you. You may not suit her. I suppose you understand waiting on table?

Sam. Feeding folks you mean?

Muddle. Well, yes.

Sam. Yes, sir, I used to feed hogs for Squire Martin.

Muddle. You'll do; you're just the person I want to wait on my wife. Consider yourself engaged, salary no object. I may have other work for you to do in the future, but I only want you to wait on the table for the present. (*exit* R. E.

Sam. That's a real nice old gent. I'm to wait on the table for the present. I ain't had a present since last Christmas. Now if I only please the old woman, I'm all O. K., and if I don't, I'm N. G. Sally told me the old woman was a crank, and she bosses the old man, and she wears the breech I mean the bloomers. The old man told me to wait on the table for the present, so here goes. (*sits on table*) I wonder what kind of a present he'll fetch me—a Christmas box I guess.

Enter SALLY, L. E., *slaps* SAMMY *on the ear who falls to floor.*

Sally. Yes, and there it is. What do you mean by sitting on the parlor table? Ain't you got no manners?

Sam. No, Sally. (*gets up*

Sally. Then I'll teach you to have some.

Sam. But Sally, the old gentleman told me to wait on the table while he was gone after a present for me.

Sally. A present for you indeed. He's full of such tricks. You learn to behave yourself, or you'll loose your job. I'm going to tell Mr. Muddle that a gentleman has called to see him.

Sam. Who is he, Sall? 'Tain't someone else for my job?

Sally. No, it's Police Inspector Pincham. (*exit* R. E.

Sam. Inspector Pincham! Well, he shan't chase me, I'll hide (*business of hiding behind screen, which falls*) Oh, laws, I thought the blame thing was fastened. (*puts screen up again*) I've brought down the house. I hope the old woman won't come in and catch me now.

Enter MRS MUDDLE *and* SALLY, R. E.

Mrs. M. Sally, I thought I heard a noise in here. (*sees* SAMMY) Who is this boy and what is he doing?

Sam. I was just fixing up the furniture, ma'am. It took a kind of a tumble, so I was bracing it up a bit.

Mrs. M. Sally, again I ask, who is this boy?

Sally. Please, ma'am, that's Sammy Dobbs, he came after the situation of strong boy, and to do chores around the house.

Sam. Yes, ma'am, I was engaged by Mr. Muddle.

Mrs. M. Then you are discharged by Mrs. Muddle.

Sam. (*aside*) Oh, laws, that's the shortest time I ever held a job, three minutes and a half. (*aloud*) Say, ma'am, won't you give me a month's notice?

Mrs. M. No, not a minutes notice.

Sam. I was in my last place six months. I wouldn't have left it then, only my time was up.

Mrs. M. Sally, send him away, and when I return, don't let me see him here. (*starts toward* R. E.

Sally. But, ma'am, master engaged him, and you might give him a trial.

Sam. (*aside to* SALLY) For the Lor's sake, Sally, don't talk about giving me a trial; the last time I stood trial, I got six months.

Mrs. M. I see that he's got flaming red hair, that's bad, it shows that he has a violent temper, and he might prove a dangerous character to have around the house. I can't bear the sight of red hair.

Sam. It ain't red, ma'am, it's a sort of brindle.

Sally. Yes, ma'am, the same color as our old brindle cow.

Mrs. M. No matter, it's too red to suit me. If it were any other color, I might possibly allow you to stay, but with that head, never!

Sam. Well, ma'am, it's the only head I've got.

Mrs. M. I can't help that, I've a strong prejudice against red hair. (*at* R. E.) Sally, send him away and never let me look upon his red head again. (*exit* R. E.

Sam. Well, Sally, I've got the bounce -that settles me.

Sally. Yes, the mean old thing, and I thought we were going to be together all the time. Say, Sammy, I've got an idea.

Sam. You'd better keep it, Sally, you may never get another.

Sally. I wouldn't be so fresh if I was you. Women have more ideas now-a-days then the men.

Sam. Yes, the bloomers was a woman's idea.

Sally. If you'll listen to me -I was going to tell you of a plan by which you could hold your job.

Sam. How, Sally, cut off my head?

Sally. No, there is a gentleman visiting here from the city, a Mr. Dabbler. He's a friend of the master's, and they say he's a great inventor, a genius they call him; he may help us out.

Sam I can't see how, Sally.

Sally. Well I can. Didn't the Missus say that if your hair was any other color but red, you might stay. Now maybe this inventor

may know of some way to change the color of your hair and you can hold the job.

Sam. That is a great idea, Sally. (*double specialty may be introduced here*) Well, I'd better be going before the old woman comes back and catches me, but before I go, Sally, you might give a fellow a kiss.

Sally. Oh Sammy, it ain't in the fashion to kiss any more, it's out of style.

Sam. A good thing is never out of style, Sally. You ain't one of these new women, are you?

Sally. Sammy Dobbs, don't you dare to insult me. You may kiss my hand, like the Knights of old used to do with their lady loves. (*holds out hand*

Sam. The old Knights were old fools, Sally

Sally. Down on your knees like the Knights of old.

Sam. Oh, hang the Knights of old. I've got the rheumatiz in my left knee and I can't kneel, Sally.

Sally. Well, I'll excuse you this time, but the next time you must kneel to me.

Sam. I'll stand on my head for you, Sally. (*takes her hand*) Sally, this is what I call pretty cold comfort.

Sally. Well Sammy, considering that I may not see you again for some time, I've changed my mind. I'll not give you a kiss, but if you take one, I'll not object.

Sam. And I'll not object, so here goes. (*kisses* SALLY

Enter DABBLER, L. E., *catches them kissing.*

Dabbler. Ahem! Ahem! (SAMMY *and* SALLY *seperate*—SAMMY *goes to* R. *corner and* SALLY *to* L. *corner*, DABBLER C.) Well, upon my word, that's pretty nice I must say, very sociaole indeed, hugging and kissing. Oh well, go ahead, enjoy yourselves while you live, you'll be a long time dead. Only take care that your Mistress does not catch you—if she does, it will be another case of "Girl Wanted," you'll surely loose your job.

Sally. I don't care.

Sam. Me neither, for I've got the bounce anyway.

Dabbler. What! already?

Sam. Oh, quicker than that.

Sally. Yes, sir, he was engaged by the master and discharged by the Missus almost in the same breath, in fact he didn't get time to draw his breath.

Sam. No, nor I didn't get time to draw my salary neither.

Sally. No, sir, and it's all on account of his red hair.

Dabbler. What's the matter with his red hair, is it not red enough?

Sally. It's too red, that's the great trouble. The Missus don't like it, and I thought sir, if you could help us out by changing the color of his hair, he might hold his job.

Dabbler. (*goes to table*) And I can help you out, Sally, and what's more, I shall help you out, Sally. (*takes medicine case from pocket*) I have here a wonderful preparation. It is my Universal Infallible remedy for changing the color of the hair. It is called my Capillary Transmogrifier. After three applications of this marvelous preparation, his own mother won't know him; his hair will become a beautiful strawberry blond, and thus he can hold his job.

Sally. (*to* SAMMY) Oh, Sammy, won't that be nice? (*to* DABBLER) Oh, thank you, sir.

Dabbler. (*goes to* SALLY) Don't mention it, Sally; and I also perceive that you have a mole coming on your chin. Now that's bad, very bad, we must prevent its further development, or after a while you'll have a double chin that would never do, you have too much chin now.

Sally. No I ain't neither.

Dabbler. But never despair, Sally, I'll fix that also. (*goes to table, business with medicine case*) I have here another wonderful preparation which I call my "Infallible Eradicator." It removes moles, corns, bunions, freckles, sun-burns, heart-burns, side-burns. It's a sure cure for all the ills that flesh is heir to. This is the bottle (*hands her bottle*) to remove the mole, and this (*hands her another bottle*) for your lover's hair.

Sam. Thank you, Mister—how much's to pay?

Mrs. M. (*heard calling off* R.) Sally! Sally!

Dabbler. The devil will be to pay if you don't get out of here.

Sam. (*runs to* L. E.) I'll get, you bet! (*exit* L. E.

Sally. Oh, Lor Sammy ran away without his bottle. I must run after him.

Dabbler. That's right, Sally, run after him. It's about time the women should run after the men turn about is fair play. (ADA *is heard laughing off* R. DABBLER *looks off* R.) Ah! whose melodious voice is that? Laughter is the sunshine of the soul. Most certainly it's not Mrs. Muddle, she never smiles. No, it's her beautiful and accomplished daughter, Ada, and she's coming in here. I'm not much of a lady's man, but I'll do my best to entertain her.

(*puts medicine case back in pocket stands near table*

Enter ADA, R. E.

Ada. Ah! Mr. Dabbler, you are the very person I desire most to see.

Dabbler. I am yours to command, Miss Muddle.

Ada. (*sits* R. *of table*) Be seated.

Dabbler. (*sits* L. *of table*) Certainly, it's more sociable and comfortable than standing.

Ada. Mr. Dabbler, as you are a man of the world, I thought I would confide in you.

Dabbler. Ah! you flatter me, I assure you.

Ada. I'm about to ask you a very bold, and perhaps to you it will seem an absurd, an impertinent question.

Dabbler. (*aside*) Perhaps she's going to propose to me. I wonder if this is leap year? (*aloud*) Proceed, Miss Bramble, I'm all attention.

Ada. Mr. Dabbler, were you ever in love?

Dabbler. (*aside*) That's a poser, she's going to pop the question, sure. (*aloud*) To be equally frank with you, Miss Bramble, I can't say with truth that I've ever been in love that is, not to my knowledge. I have been in some very dangerous predicaments, owing to the fact that I used to walk in my sleep and fell down three flight of stairs, and I was also subject to the night-mare. However, as love is said to be a very contageous disease, especially when one is exposed to the influence of a young and beautiful woman, there is no telling how soon I may fall a victim. It may be my turn next.

Ada. Well, Mr. Dabbler, I'm in love.

Dabbler. (*aside*) Adorable creature! I wonder if it's with me? (*aloud*) That's good, very good.

Ada. But the young man is poor. Oh, very poor.

Dabbler. That's bad—d-d-d—I mean very bad. (*aside*) She means me, that's certain.

Ada. But in spite of his poverty I love him, and I know that he loves me.

Dabbler. (*aside*) Noble self-sacrificing creature, she loves me in spite of my poverty. She must mean me. There's no one as poor as I am. I can wait no longer. (*rises*) Miss Bramble, why should you keep me in this terrible suspense? Come to the point at once and let us understand each other. Of course the name of this poor, but happy man is—

Ada. Charles Melrose.

Dabbler. (*falls back in chair—aside*) Oh Lord, it wasn't me after all. I came very near making a blame fool of myself.

Ada. It is in this matter I may need your advise and assistance.

Dabbler. And you shall have it, Miss, with the greatest alacrity and celerity.

Ada. There is a powerful obstacle to our union.

Dabbler. There always is. The course of true love never did run smooth. I see you want me to help you to remove the aforesaid obstacle—and I can do it.

Ada. But the obstacle is my mother.

Dabbler. Well, I can remove your mother.

Ada. (*rises*) Mr. Dabbler, you astonish me!

Dabbler. (*rises apologetically*) I beg your pardon, but you did not quite understand me. I did not mean to use physical force. I intend to overcome her objections by moral persuasion, so to speak, and thus gain her consent to your marriage. And I flatter myself I'm just the man to accomplish the task. (*both sit down again*

Ada. If you succeed in this—

Dabbler. Oh, success is certain. I know no such word as fail, whatever I undertake I carry out.

Ada. If you do this, I shall be forever indebted to you.

Dabbler. Don't get in debt, Miss, don't get in debt to any one. I've been there, I know what it is. You owe me nothing. To make others happy is happiness enough for me. I ask no greater reward.

Ada. You must know that mother is very obstinate in some things.

Dabbler. Yes, so I've heard.

Ada. And she thinks I ought to marry a man of her choosing. Now I object to her coercing me in a matter which involves the happiness of my whole life. I ought to have some say in the affair. Don't you think so, Mr. Dabbler?

Dabbler. Think so? I am sure so, Miss Bramble. In as much as 'tis you who is going to marry the man, and not your mamma, and as you have reached the years of discretion, I should imagine you ought to have a very big say in the matter.

Ada. She wants me to marry an old man. Of course he can't help his being old.

Dabbler. Of course not, we'll all be old if we live long enough.

Ada. But I don't want to marry him, and I won't marry him!

I've made up my mind on that point!

Dabbler. I admire your determination. Do not give your hand where your heart can never go.

Ada. There ought to be a limit to filial obedience, especially when the happiness of one's whole life is at stake.

Dabbler. Perfectly correct. Don't allow them to trample on you or coerce you into matrimony against your will. Maintain the glorious prerogative of your sex. This is the age of Woman's Rights and Female Sufferage.

Ada. Well, whatever happens, I am determined never to marry old Deacon Spyder.

Dabbler. Oh, ho! so that's the prospective husband your mamma has chosen for you, eh?

Ada. Yes.

Dabbler. Well, I don't blame you for revolting against such an unnatural and unholy alliance. Talk of December and May. It's another example of "Come into my parlor says the spider to the fly." Do not let that fossilized old hypocrite entangle you in his web, or you are lost, hopelessly lost. You go on your way rejoicing and leave me to deal with him. Say but the word, and I shall remove this spider from your path forever.

Ada. (*rises*) No, I would not have you harm him; he's an old man and has not long to live

Dabbler. (*rises*) All the more reason he should die soon.

Ada. Not under any circumstances would I sanction violence. We can overcome the difficulty without resorting to such extreme measures.

Dabbler. But how?

Ada. We can elope in an automobile.

Dabbler. Why of course *we* can! I never thought of that.

Ada. *We sir!* Mr. Dabbler, you forget yourself.

Dabbler. No, I forgot Charley; excuse my slight mistake. So Charley and you are going to elope in an automobile? How delightfully romantic.

Ada. (*goes to* R. E.) I thank you for your advice, Mr. Dabbler, and I'll bid you good-day. (*exit* R. E.

Dabbler Good-day, Miss. Elope in an automobile when the moon is full, eh? Oh, love, love! what fantastic tricks are committed in thy name! So Deacon Spyder is weaving his web of mischief around this innocent fly. Very well, Deacon, forewarned, forearmed, we must try and checkmate your little game.

Enter JASPER MUDDLE, R. E.

Muddle. Ah! Dabbler, I'm glad to see you. Well, how is everything?

Dabbler. 'Tis I who should ask you that question. When are we going to make that experiment and place your wife under the influence?

Muddle. To-day my wife is suffering from her usual ear-ache and it will be a capital opportunity to administer the narcotic without exciting her suspicion.

Dabbler. Good! but tell me, have you a liberal supply of ice on hand?

Muddle. Yes, I have given the order to the iceman on the quiet to

bring a large quantity.

Dabbler. Have you also prepared a place where she can be concealed afterwards?

Muddle. (*goes up* R.) Yes, I've thought of that also. (*draws curtain back between two flies*) Don't you think this recess will do?

Dabbler. (*goes up* R. *and examines recess*) Ah, capital! Just the thing, the recess will be a success. (*both come down*, DABBLER *sits* L. *of table*, MUDDLE R. *of table*) Every thing is lovely.

Enter SALLY, L. E.

Sally. Please sir! a gentleman wishes to know what rent you ask for the house next door?

Muddle. One hundred dollars per month, Sally, invariably in advance. Did he give his name?

Sally. I think, sir, he said his name was Cheathim.

Muddle. Cheathim; I don't much like that name. The name of my last tenant was Beathim, and sure enough he did beat me, he lived up to the letter of his name. Sally, tell Mr. Cheathim that we must have good reference and a month's rent in advance. I can't afford to take any chances on a man with a name like Cheathim.

Sally. All right, sir. (*exit* L. E.

Dabbler. A smart girl that.

Muddle. Yes, and very courageous.

Dabbler. In what respect?

Muddle. In the respect that she's the only person in this house, that's not afraid of my wife.

Enter SALLY, L. E.

Sally. The gentleman says, the house and the rent suits him, and he's going to come back in a short time with the rent and a reference from headquarters.

Muddle. Headquarter's, Sally? Is he connected with the Salvation Army?

Sally. Not knowing, can't say, sir, but he looks like a military man of some sort, because he said to me "Right about face, young woman." (*both men laugh*

Muddle. You may go, Sally, and tell him that he can take possession as soon as he brings the money.

Sally. All right, sir! (*exit* L. E.

Dabbler. (*takes medicine case from pocket*) Now then, friend Muddle, everything is in readiness to make the experiment. Go and bring your wife in here.

Muddle. But are you sure you have the antidote?

Dabbler. Oh, quite sure, it's in my overcoat which hangs in the hall. But do you think she suspects our little game?

Muddle. Oh, no, we are perfectly safe. (*goes to* R. E.) But I do hope your experiment will prove successful. (*exit* R. E.

Dabbler. So do I, but then it's sure to be a success in the end, though it may fail in Mrs. Muddles case, and even should she die from the effects of it, she'll be only another martyr to the glorious cause of experimental science.

(*turns to table, business with medicine case*

Enter MUDDLE, R. E.

Muddle. Dabbler, she is coming.

Dabbler. Let her come, everything is in readiness.

Muddle. (*nervous*) Except the ice, the man is late to-day.

Dabbler. But man, you are nervous; compose yourself, or your agitation will betray you. (*takes whiskey flask from pocket and hands it to him*) Here, take a swallow of this whiskey, it will brace you up.

Muddle. But she will smell my breath.

Dabbler. Keep your mouth shut and breathe through your nose and she'll never detect it.

Muddle. A good idea, but I mustn't let anybody catch me drinking.

Dabbler. (*crosses* C.) Drink ahead and I'll keep a look out. (*looks off* R.

Muddle. Well, Dabbler, here's looking at you. (*about to drink*

Iceman. (*heard off* L. *loudly*) Ice!

Muddle. (*excited, speaks to* ICEMAN) Yes, yes, fetch a ton. Oh Lord, what a voice that man's got; he ought to be playing heavy tragedy instead of peddling ice. Well, here's happy days. (*about to drink again*

Enter SALLY, L. E., *quickly.*

Sally. Did you order a whole ton of ice, sir?

Muddle. (*nervous, hides bottle*) Yes, yes, Sally, I want to lay in a large supply in case there might be a corner on the ice market. I always look ahead you know.

Sally. It's all right, sir, if you say so, but I should like to know what Missus will think about it. (*exit* L. E.

Muddle. Yes, and so should I. Confound it, I'll never get this drink if they keep on interrupting me. (*business with bottle*) Well, Dabbler, here she goes. (*starts to drink*

Dabbler. No, here she comes. (*crosses* L.) Hide it, hide it.

Enter MRS. MUDDLE, R. E., *remains at entrance.*

Muddle. (*aside, hides bottle*) Oh Lord, she's caught me. (*very nervous*

Mrs. M. (*comes* C., *looks suspiciously at* MUDDLE) Jasper Jay, what's the matter, have you got the St. Vitus dance?

Muddle. No my dear, I have had a rush of something to the head and it has made me slightly dizzy, that's all. (*goes to* L. *corner*

Mrs. M. The natural effects of prolonged dissipation, no doubt. (*sits at table,* L.) You ought to be ashamed of yourself, but then you are utterly lost to all sense of shame. (*to* DABBLER) Mr. Dabbler, I understand you have made the ear a special study?

Dabbler. Yes, Madam, I flatter myself I possess considerable knowledge of the human ear.

Mrs. M. I am glad to know this, and I would like to avail myself of your scientific knowledge in my case. You may be able to afford me some relief, for years I have suffered in silence.

Muddle. (*aside*) Suffered in silence! Whoever heard of a woman suffering in silence.

Mrs. M. I uttered no word of complaint, for I well knew I'd get no sympathy, even from those from whom I had the best right to

expect it. (*looks sternly at* MUDDLE

Muddle. (*aside*) She means me.

Mrs. M. Now I am ready, you can proceed.

Dabbler. One word of explanation, Madam. Before we proceed any further, there is one thing absolutely necessary in this case, and that is, that this medicine must be administered by the loving hands of your husband.

Mrs. M. Oh well, in that case I'll have to submit, but tell him to be careful. (*to* MUDDLE) Now I am ready.

Dabbler. (*aside to* MUDDLE, *handing him vial*) Now old man, brace up, or you'll give the whole snap away. Remember, breathe through your nose.

Muddle. (*takes vial, crosses c. aside*) Say, Dabbler, I don't half like this job.

Dabbler. Remember, give her only four drops.

Muddle. (*to* MRS. MUDDLE) My dear, lend me your ear.

Mrs. M. Jasper Jay, this is no time for levity.

(MRS. MUDDLE *lays head on arm*

Muddle. I assure you, my dear, I was never more serious in all my life. Are you ready?

Mrs. M. Yes.

Muddle. Then let her go.

(*pours contents of vial in her ear, she gradually becomes unconscious*

Dabbler. Ah ha, plunged into the profound slumber of sweet oblivion. How many drops did you give her?

Muddle. I forgot to count them.

Dabbler. Forgot to count them! I told you only four drops.

Muddle. In my excitement I forgot to count.

Dabbler. Unhappy man! your forgetfulness may cost you your life.

Muddle. Well, I'll be hanged.

Dabbler. You won't be hanged, you'll be electrocuted: a more humane and expeditious mode of capital punishment, and you'll be another martyr to the glorious cause of experimental science

(*goes to* L. *corner*

Enter SALLY, L. E.

Sally. A gentleman to see Mr. Muddle.

Muddle. Who is he, Sally?

Sally. Inspector Pinchim, Chief of Police.

Dabbler. Show him in, Sally. (*exit* SALLY, L. E.

Muddle. Oh, Dabbler, why did you say that? I was going to send him word that I was out. Here's a nice situation for a gentleman of my position.

Dabbler. Oh, brace up man, if he sees you so agitated, it'll be a dead give away. (*goes to* L. *corner*

Muddle. What else would you call it but a dead give away, when my wife here may be a corpse.

Sam. (*heard off* L.) Where is he?

Muddle. You hear that! they're after me already. (*runs to* R. E.

Enter SAMMY, L. E., *followed by* SALLY

Sam. Oh, let me at him!

Muddle. (*at* R. E.) Who do you want?

Sam. (*up* C.) That Infallible Remedy man.

Dabbler. (*goes to* R. *corner, taking off coat*) If that's all, I guess I can accommodate you.

Sally. (*comes* R. C.) Hold! you shall not touch one single hair on my Sammy's head.

Sam. Right you are, Sally, for there ain't a single hair to touch.

SAMMY *removes hat, shows bald head,* (*he should wear a scalp*) *all scream—* SALLY *falls in chair* L. *of table,* DABBLER R. *of table,* SAMMY *stands* C., MUDDLE *falls on sofa.*

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—Plain room, recess up R. *between two flies, doors* R. *and* L., *table and two chairs* L., *screen up* L. C.

Enter ADA, R. E. *as curtain rises—* SALLY *is heard singing off* L.

Ada. (*calls*) Sally, come here!

Enter SALLY, L. E.

Sally. Did you call me, Miss Ada?

Ada. Yes, have you seen father this afternoon?

Sally. Yes, Miss, I saw him down by the fish-pond, and he was acting very funny, Miss.

Ada. Funny, Sally, what do you mean?

Sally. He cut up like as if he had wheels in his head.

Ada. Wheels in his head? I don't understand you.

Sally. Well, as if he was out of his mind, gone clean crazy.

Ada. Indeed! what was he doing?

Sally. Walking up and down like a sentry on guard, and talking to himself, I could hear every word. He clasped his hands to his head this way, (*puts both hands to her head*) and said, "What have I to live for? Nothing—then let me die." That's what I heard him say, Miss, then I got scared and ran away.

Ada. Poor father! I fear his mind is giving way. It seems to me, that ever since this Mr. Dabbler has come here, there has been nothing but trouble and confusion. (*sits* R. *of table*

Sally. That's a fact, Miss. His Infallible Remedies are a nuisance and he himself is a regular crank. Look at my poor Sammy, he had a beautiful head of red hair, and now his head is as smooth as a billiard ball, and he's got to wear a wig.

Ada. You need not worry about that, Sally, he's a young man, and his hair will grow out again, thicker and redder than before.

Sally. Oh, Miss, don't say redder than before; if so, he'll have to go as head-light of a locomotive.

Ada. Have you seen mother this afternoon?

Sally. No, Miss, I asked the master and he said she had gone to the races.

NOTE:—Price of scalp, 50cts., AMES' PUBLISHING CO., Clyde, O.

Ada. To the races?

Sally. That's what he said.

Ada. Ridiculous nonsense.

Sally. That's what I said, and so I thought there was something wrong in his upper story, because I knew that Missus would never attend the races. She couldn't even bear the thought of horse-racing. She always said it was cruelty to deaf and dumb animals, and that it ought to be stopped, and as for that Mr. Dabbler, the Infallible Remedy man, it's my opinion he ain't nothing but a regular crank.

Ada. I think you're quite right, Sally. (*rises and goes to* L. E.) Come with me, Sally, I want you to help me pack my suit case, I am going to the city.

Sally. Oh, Miss Ada, you ain't going to elope and get married on the sly, are you?

Ada. (*laughs*) I elope, Sally! What on earth put that into your head? Why should I do such a thing?

Sally. I don't know why, only a great many young ladies do, because it's so romantic, you know, besides I thought you might want to euchre the old woman.

Ada. Sally, how dare you!

Sally. I mean your mamma, because she's dead sore on your sweetheart, Charley, and won't let you marry him. She wants you to marry that old "Stick in the Mud," Deacon Spyder.

Ada. Well, Sally, make your mind easy on that point. I have no intentions of eloping. When I get ready to marry, I'll fear nobody. I shall point with pride to my affianced husband and say to the world, "There stands my future Lord and Master, I take him with all his imperfections on his head. (*exit* L. E.

Sally. Me too when I marry Sammy, I shall say to the world, "There stands my future Lord and Master, I take him with all the hair off of his head." (*exit* L. E.

Enter MUDDLE, R. E., *with wine bottle, two glasses and cigar box, looks cautiously around, places bottle and box on table, calls to* DABBLER *off* R.

Muddle. Come in, Dabbler, the coast is clear.

Enter DABBLER, R. E.

Dabbler. And the patient, no doubt, sleeps peacefully still.

Muddle. The first time she was ever still in all her life.

Dabbler. Come, let us take a peep at her.

(*both go up to recess, draw curtains back*

Enter DEACON SPYDER, L. E., *sees them, hides behind screen.*

Muddle. I'm almost afraid to look at her, what if she should wake up.

Dabbler. Nonsense, man, she may never wake up.

Muddle. She looks as natural as life itself.

Dabbler. It is life and death at the same time. (*goes and sits* R. *of table*) In her case it may be more death than life.

(MUDDLE *sits* L. *of table*

Deacon. (*aside, behind screen*) What's this I hear? Mrs. Muddle

dead? They have poisoned her. Oh, the depravity of human nature.

Dabbler. (*pours out wine*) But come, let us enjoy ourselves, and bid dull care be gone. As we journey through life, let us live by the way, "Eat, drink and be merry."

Muddle. Of course, Dabbler, you know the rest of the proverb.

Dabbler. Oh yes, "Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow you die."

Muddle. I hope not, though I have a strange presentiment of coming danger.

Deacon. (*aside*) He is right, I'll have them both arrested for murder.

Dabbler. Nonsense, man, it's your weak nerves. There's an old and a true saying, that weak nerves are the devil's fiddle strings, and he plays many a strange tune upon them. Come, drink a toast with me. (*holds up glass*) "Here's to King, Death the Master of Life, whose reign is eternal." (*both drink*

Muddle. Dabbler, although I drink to that toast, I don't quite like the sentiment. Talking of death sends a cold chill right through me.

Dabbler. Nonsense, man, as I said before, it's your weak nerves. You are not to allow your imagination to dethrone your reason, and run away with your common sense. If the worst comes to the worst, you'll not be hanged, you'll only be electrocuted. See what a glorious advantage you enjoy by living in this enlightened 20th. century. A man can now be put to death as quietly and gently as a little babe can be lulled to sleep in it's mother's arms.

Muddle. Quite true, but one dies all the same.

Dabbler. Of course you die, but it takes the sting out of death to die in such a luxurious manner. It might be called "Dying made easy, or how to shuffle off this mortal coil."

Deacon. (*aside*) Oh, the fiends to talk so flippantly of death.

Muddle. I say, Dabbler, wouldn't it be a good idea to remove the body to some secure place, it may be discovered here, and then we are lost? What do you say to the coal hole?

Deacon. (*aside*) The coal hole! They are going to remove the body. I'll have them arrested at once.

Dabbler. No, that would be extremely risky in her present frozen condition, she would break into a thousand pieces.

Muddle Well, you know best, but in case of accident, are you quite sure you've got the antidote?

Dabbler. Oh, quite certain. I never go without it. It's in my coat pocket that I left hanging in the hall. But come, have another drink, it will brace you up a bit. (*fills both glasses*

Muddle. All right, I want something to calm my agitated nerves. (*both drink*) You see, Dabbler, if I should be found out, the consequences would be frightful to contemplate.

Dabbler. (*takes cigar from box on table*) Then don't contemplate them. Never meet trouble half way. (*rises*) Come, let us take a walk and a smoke in the garden. There is no tonic so bracing as pure fresh air. Come along. (*exit* R. E.

Muddle. (*rises*) Dabbler is a good fellow and all that, but I heartily wish that he and his Concentrated Essence of The Milk of Human Kindness were at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean.

(*business of peeping through curtain*

Iceman. (*heard off* L.) Ice!

Muddle. (*nervous*) Yes, yes, of course! I nearly forgot all about it. Now I must event a plausible story, a sort of a white lie, to throw the ice man off his guard. He'll think it a remarkable thing to put ice in here, and he may tell the neighbors about my wife. I have it, I shall tell him she is under the influence of ardent spirits. Of course that's a lie, but then, the truth should not be spoken at all times, and the end justifies the means. If necessary, I'll bribe him to keep quiet. I wouldn't have the village gossips know of this for all the world.

Iceman. (*heard off* L.) Ice!

Muddle. Oh, Lord, I fear he'll wake up the dead. (*speaks off* L.) Bring it in here, my friend.

Enter ICEMAN, L. E., *with piece of ice.*

Iceman. Where do ye want it, sir?

Muddle. (*goes to recess, draws curtains aside*) Put it right in here, my friend. Don't be scared, it's only my wife.

(ICEMAN *puts ice in recess*

Iceman. What's the matter with the old lady, sir?

Muddle. Now my friend, I'm going to take you in.

Iceman. (*surprised*) Take me in, sir! What for? Sure I ain't done nothing!

Muddle. You don't understand me! I'm not going to take you into custody, but into my confidence, and at the same time ask you to keep a secret.

Iceman. All roight, sir, I'll kape anything ye give me.

Muddle. I have no doubt of it, my friend. The real fact of the matter is, my wife is a little bit under the weather, in plain words, she's intoxicated.

Iceman. In plainer words she's got a jag on, and she's slapeing it off.

Muddle. Yes, exactly, and the doctor ordered her to be kept in a cool place until she recovers. Now as a personal favor to me, I don't wish you to tell the neighbors anything about this.

Iceman. Not a syllable, sir, on the word of Moike Maloney, the iceman. Sure it's none of me business. Oi've all thot I can do to moind me own business, and bedad, Oi'm a wake behind at thot.

Muddle. Of the entire quantity of ice you bring here daily, I want you to put one half in the refrigerator down stairs, and the other half in this recess until I tell you to stop. You understand?

Iceman. Yes sor, and Oi'll do thot same, and if ye told me to put the ice on the top of a red hot stove, Oi'd do it and ask no questions.

Muddle. That's right, my friend, I see you are a model man.

Iceman. No sor, Oi'm an icemon and Oi always moind me own business.

Muddle. That's the way to get along in this world. A still tongue shows a wise head. (*gives him a silver dollar*) Here, my friend, is a little souvenir of the United States Mint in Washington; it's legal tender and supposed to be worth one hundred cents, but that depends upon the state of the money market. Go now and remember the old proverb, "Silence is golden."

Iceman. And money talks ivery toime. Long loife to ye sor. (*goes to* L. E.) May ye never die till Oi kill ye, and ye'll live to be as old

as Methusalah. Oi'll do what ye told me and kape me mouth shut, bekase Oi'm a man that always moinds me own business and never moinds any one else's business, bekase their business is their business and none of my business. (*exit* L. E.

Muddle. (*goes to* R. E.) That iceman is full of business. Well, I flatter myself I smoothed over that difficulty pretty well. When a man tells one lie, he has to invent a hundred others to support the first. I now realize the truth of the old saying, that a successful liar needs a good memory. (*exit* R. E.

Deacon. (*comes from behind screen*) I see it all. This is a clear case of cold blooded murder. I overheard their own confession, and the rascals were going to remove the body to the coal hole. They have evidently given her slow poison. Oh, the depravity of human nature. (*sees bottle on table, smells of it*) Wine! (*looks around, drinks*) Yes, verily it is good wine. (*drinks*

Enter SALLY, L. E., *unseen by* DEACON, *sees him drinking.*

Sally. (*aside*) Get on to the old Spyder getting a jag on at master's expense. Oh, the depravity of human nature.

(*exit* L. E. *quickly*

Deacon. (*startled, looks around*) I thought I heard a mysterious noise. (*sits* L.) To think of Jasper Jay Muddle being a cold blooded murderer, is something frightful to contemplate. It is quite true that his wife, Mrs. Jezabel Muddle, had a terrible temper. (MRS. MUDDLE *peeps through curtain so as to be seen by audience*) And it was almost enough to drive any man to murder, but he should have adapted another course. He could have gone to South Dakota and got a divorce. If she had been my wife I'd have put her head in a sack or gagged her, to keep her tongue from wagging. If that wouldn't do, I'd have engaged the services of an able bodied animal tamer to keep her in a cage. I really feel sorry for Jasper Jay Muddle for having had the misfortune to marry such a she-devil but there's no accounting for tastes. Speaking of taste reminds me I'll just taste that wine once more, it is most palatable and refreshing. (*turns to table, drinks*) I shall now take a peep at the body and then hasten to the police station and put the officers of the law upon the track of the murderers. (*goes to recess, draws curtain, looks in*) Yes, she is dead, no doubt of it. I might say she is very dead, and she has made everyone so happy by dying, yet she seems natural, the same vindictive expression as in life, the same vinegar face that soured everything it looked upon. (*closes curtains*) Bah! the very sight of her makes me sick. (*goes to* L. E.) Nevertheless I must do my duty as a christian man and have Jasper Jay Muddle and his accomplice, Phineas Dabbler arrested at once. I shall now go for the police.

(*exit* L. E.

Enter MRS. MUDDLE, *from recess.*

Mrs. M. Deacon Spyder, the old canting hypocrite, the very man I considered my best friend, called me a she-devil and said the sight of me made him sick. I'll get even with him for that, if for nothing else. As for that other pair of practical jokers, I'll know how to deal with them when the time comes. I am glad I pretended to be under the influence of that narcotic, and I shall keep up the deception. I may find out something more. I'll hide in the wine-cellar,

and when my husband returns for a fresh supply of wine, as he's sure to do, I'll scare the life out of him. I'll turn the tables on them. They're not going to have all the fun to themselves, not if I can help it. There'll be a regular surprise party in this house in the sweet bye and bye, or my name is not Jezabel Muddle.

(*exit* R. E.

Enter SAMMY, L. E., *cautiously.*

Sam. I wonder where Sally is? I want to see her. I hope the old woman ain't around here. I don't want to see her, and I guess she don't want to see me neither. (*goes to table*) I went and bought me a wig. (*takes off wig*) It don't fit very well, it's too small for me and hurts my head, but its the best I could get for the money. I have to take it off now and then to give my head a rest. (*places wig on table*) I wish Sally would come. (*sits at table*) I may as well wait here as anywhere else. There don't seem to be anybody around, I must keep myself company. (*takes bottle*) That smells good. (*drinks*) It tastes good too. I hope it ain't rough on rats. (*drinks*) No, I guess it ain't, it's wine. I can't leave it here to spoil. (*drinks*) Some men never know when they have enough, and that's the reason they drink too much. I'm different, you can't give me too much. I always know when to stop, when the bottle's empty. One last night-cap before I go. (*drinks*) I guess Sally must be out. No matter, I can leave my card and call again some other time. (*drinks, then feels in pockets for card*) Where's that card? (*finds card*) Oh, here it is—the Jack of Spades Sally will know my card: well, I'll take one last bracer and then be on my journey. (*drinks*

Mrs. M. (*heard off* R. *calling*) Sally, Sally!

Sam. (*jumps up*) Oh Lord, the old woman, where shall I hide? (*rushes around, looks behind screen*) Not there, she'd be sure to find me. I'll go this way. (*goes to* L. E.

Iceman. (*heard off* L.) Ice!

Sam. No I won't. (*goes to recess and looks in*) Ah! this seems a snug looking spot. I'll get in here. It feels tarnation cool, but it won't be for long, and beggars can't be choosers, so here goes.

(*exit into recess*

Enter MRS. MUDDLE, R. E.

Mrs. M. I wonder where Sally can be? I want to see her.

Sam. (*heard from recess, aside*) So do I.

Mrs. M. If I find she has gone to meet that clod-hopper lover of her's, I'll discharge her immediately. For the life of me I can't imagine what she can see in that red headed idiot.

Sam. (*heard from recess, aside*) Red headed idiot! She means me!

Mrs. M. (*goes to table, sees wig*) What's this, a wig?

Sam. (*from recess, aside*) Mine, by thunder!

Mrs. M. I wonder how it came here? No matter, I shall keep it.

Sam. (*from recess, aside*) The devil she will, then I'll be out a wig. (SALLY *heard off* L. *singing* MRS. MUDDLE *goes* L., *calls*) Sally, Sally! come here, I wish to speak with you at once!

Enter SALLY, L. E.

Sally. I'm coming, ma'am.

Mrs. M. (*shows wig*) Sally, do you know anything about this?

Sally. (*begins to cry*) Oh, ma'am, he's gone and made away with himself.

Mrs. M. Girl, what do you mean?

Sally. Master, of course. He told me he was going to drown himself in the fish pond, and now he's gone and done it, and it was you drove him to it, by nagging at him all the time, then he cuts off his head and walks down and throws himself into the pond. Oh, oh, my poor master, to think of him laying at the bottom of the pond without his head, he'll be sure to catch his death of rheumatiz.

(*weeps*

Mrs. M. Stop your crying, foolish girl. Can't you see that this is not a human head, but only a wig?

Sally. Then perhaps he's been scalped by Indians. There's an Indian medicine show in the village.

Mrs. M. Nonsense, girl! This wig, no doubt, belongs to this Mr. Dabbler, who may be an amateur actor. (*places wig on table*

Sally. Oh, wouldn't that be glorious! to see him act out on the real stage just like Keene in Richard III, when he jumps out of bed and cries, "Give me another horse" and wakes up to find it was only a night-mare.

Mrs. M. Girl, you should not go to theatres. Such places are very wicked and demoralizing.

Sally. Have you ever been to one?

Mrs. M. I go to such a place—never! But from what I hear —

Sally. Oh, you're not to believe all you hear, and only half what you see. If you've never been to a theatre, you don't know nothing at all about them.

Mrs. M. No, but I can imagine.

Sally. Oh yes, you can imagine a heap of things that ain't so. Your imagination is altogether too lively. The world is full of just such cranks, they become so goody, goody, that they end up by being good-for-nothing. Seeing is believing go and see for yourself, and if you find anything demoralizing in seeing a good show, you must be mighty easy demoralized, that's all I've got to say.

(*crosses to* L. *corner*

Mrs. M. Girl, you should not speak so to me.

Sally. (*tragically.*) Then by all the gods, you should not so have taunted me!

Mrs. M. (*screams and drops on chair*) Oh, oh! (SAM *laughs*, MRS. MIDDLE *jumps up*) What was that?

Sally. (*tragically*) 'Tis but the idle wind which I regard not.

Mrs. M. Stop this nonsense, girl, and listen to me. Can you keep a secret?

Sally. If you can't keep it yourself, how can you expect me to keep it for you. I'm pretty full now.

Mrs. M. What?

Sally. Of family secrets, I mean—you think you're the only one, but there are others just as numerous.

Mrs. M. It's my opinion there's something wrong going on in this house.

Sally. (*laughs*) Something wrong going on? Why, that ain't no secret, I knew it all the time.

Mrs. M. In my opinion there's a diabolical plot on foot.

Sally. I don't know whether it's on foot or horseback, but what's

it all about.

Mrs. M. The plot I allude to aims at my happiness, perhaps my life, but I shall take steps to foil the villains.

Sally. I see you're going to queer their little game?

Mrs. M. Yes, and in order to do so, I am going to disappear for a time.

Sally. (*aside*) I wish she'd disappear forever, we'd have some peace in the house.

Mrs. M. But I shall return when they least expect me.

Sally. I don't doubt it.

Mrs. M. But, in the meantime, I don't wish you to tell anybody of my whereabouts.

Sally. How can I tell anybody of your whereabouts, when I don't know whereabouts you'll be.

Mrs. M. (*goes to* R. E.) Remember, Sally, no matter what happens, no matter who asks for me, you know nothing. (*exit* R. E.

Sally. I know nothing, that'll be easy enough. (*goes to table*) It's the softest job I ever got in my life. This family is funnier than a circus. (*sits at table, takes up wig*) I'd like to know who this wig belongs to?

Enter SAMMY, *from recess.*

Sam. To me, Sally. (*takes wig from* SALLY

Sally. (*startled, rises*) Oh, Sammy, you frightened me so! How on earth did you get in here?

Sam. By the door, of course. You don't suppose I could get in through the key-hole, do you? I heard the old woman's voice calling "Sally, Sally!" I knew she didn't mean me, so I jumped into that ice-chest yonder, and in my haste, I forgot my wig.

Sally. Well, Sammy, you needn't have gone to the expense of buying that wig at all, for I have another bottle that will fix you all right.

Sam. No, thanks, I'm fixed now. No more Infallible Remedies for me. I'm going to let nature take it's course now. If my hair don't come out again, it can stay in. I don't care. It'll save me lot's of money in hair cuts, and when we are married, Sally, you can't drag me around by the hair of the head, there's some comfort in that.

Sally. Sammy, I must tell you all, it was my fault, the bottle I gave you was intended for me. I got them mixed and gave you the wrong bottle.

Sam. (*pretends to cry*) Oh, Sally, Sally, silly Sally, why did you put up such a job on me? What have I ever done to you? Haven't I always bought you chewing gum and ice-cream soda when I had the money. First you go and steal away my heart, then you end up by taking all the hair off my head. Oh, this is more than flesh and blood can bear! Oh, it's too much, too much! It's the last straw that breaks the elephants trunk. Oh, oh, oh! (*goes to* L. *corner*

Sally. (*follows him, coaxing*) Oh, Sammy, don't cry, I didn't mean it, it was all a mistake, indeed it was. Hairless or brainless, you are all the same to me. (*puts arm around his neck*

Sam. (*smiles*) Oh, Sally, I wasn't crying, I was only guying. I bought this wig on purpose, so that I might get the job and be near you all the time.

(*specialties may be introduced here* MUDDLE, *after specialty, heard off* R.

Sally. Sammy, that's master; you'd better get into your hiding place, quick, till I see what he wants. If he comes in he will catch you.

Sam. But Sally, that's the ice-box. I'll freeze to death.

Sally. Nonsense, the ice-box is down stairs. You will have to stay only a minute.

Sam. (*at recess, shivers*) I'll catch my death of cold, I know I shall.

Sally. Wait a minute, I'll soon fix you out all right. (*exit* L. E.

Sam. (*goes to table, drinks out of bottle*) And in the meantime, I'll bid good-bye to an old friend.

Enter SALLY, L. E., *with a summer overcoat, catches* SAMMY *drinking.*

Sally. Here! put that down and put this on. (SAMMY *places bottle on table*) It belongs to the Infallible Remedy man, but he won't miss it for a time. (SAMMY *puts on overcoat*) Now in with you, and when you get a chance, come down to the kitchen and you shall have a good dinner, then you can escape through the coal hole.

(*exit* SAMMY, *into recess*

Sam. (*heard from recess*) Oh, Lord, this is like a game of hide and seek.

Sally. Hush!

Iceman. (*heard from off* L. E.) Ice! (*exit* SALLY, R. E.

Sam. (*heard from recess*) Here's that Irishman with ice. What the devil is he putting it in here for? I'll have a dandy attack of chills before I get out of this. I wish I had brought that bottle in here with me.

Enter ICEMAN, L. E., *with ice.*

Iceman. The ould gint told me to put ice in here until he told me to stop, and Oi always do what Oi'm told and ask no questions. (*places ice in recess*) Bedad, the old lady's gone, but there's another in there now with a jag on. Bedad, this is s great family for jags, so it is, but it's none of me business, so it aint. Oi always moind me own business. (*sees bottle on table*) Bedad, there's a bottle. Oi do be wondering if there's anything in it. (*examines bottle*) Bedad, it's nearly full and Oi am nearly empty. Bedad, I'll divide with the bottle. Oi'll take one-half and give the bottle the other. (*drinks*) Beejabers, but thot's good stuff, so it is. Oi don't blame the old lady for getting full. (*drinks*

Sam. (*aside, looks out*) Oh, Lor', that Irishman won't leave me a drop. (*whistling like a canary bird heard off* L.

Iceman. Thot do sound like a canary bird. I loves to hear them sing, the little darlings. There's no bird Oi loikes as well as a canary bird, except it's a Thanksgiving turkey, when they're well stuffed with sage and onions. (*drinks*) Bedad, thot goes to the roight spot; it's eating and drinking at the same toime.

Sam. (*heard from recess, aside*) There won't be much drinking left when he gets through with it.

Iceman. Any mon who could fill up on thot stuff all the winter, wouldn't want no overcoat, so he wouldn't. He'd be as snug as a bug in a rug, so he would. Oi'll take a little more, my job's a hard one, so it is; carrying big chunks of ice ain't what it's cracked up

to be, so it ain't. (*drinks* SAMMY *pokes head out from recess and sees the* ICEMAN *drink—bell heard off* L.) Some one is coming, Oi'm going. (*exit* L. E.

Enter SALLY, R. E.

Sally. There's some one at the door. (*exit* L. E.

Sam. I'd better be getting out of here, or I'll get into trouble. (*disappears*) Oh, what become of that wig. I must find it and then for the kitchen and through the coal hole to liberty.

Enter DEACON, L. E.

Deacon. Well, I have given information to the police, and they'll be here presently.

Sam. (*heard from recess, aside*) I'll be out of here presently.

Deacon. I shall now take a look into yonder recess, to make certain that they have not removed the corpse to the coal hole.

Sam. (*from recess, aside*) Corpse to the coal hole? What the devil is he talking about?

Deacon. On second thoughts I won't look, I'll just feel if it's there. (*puts hand in recess,* SAMMY *bites him,* DEACON *screams*) A most extraordinary thing. I accidentally placed my hand in the mouth and she bit me. The jaws closed upon my hand like a snapping turtle. I suppose it's what the doctors call muscular contraction, it may prove dangerous. I must hasten to a drug store at once and get something for it before blood poisoning sets in. I'll be back in time to witness the arrest. (*exit* R. E.

Enter SAMMY, *from recess.*

Sam. Back in time to witness my arrest. Oh, well, I guess not, I'll get right out of here.

Muddle. (*heard from off* R.) Dabbler, I insist upon it.

Sam. Oh Lord, I'm in for life. (*exit into recess again quickly*

Enter MUDDLE *and* DABBLER, R. E.

Muddle. (R. C.) Now see here, Dabbler, this joke has gone far enough. I say, produce your antidote and restore her to consciousness. This agony of doubt and suspense is more than I can bear, when I think of the horrible mystery behind yonder curtain, sleeping, perhaps, in death, I tremble, and again I say, produce your antidote.

Dabbler. Very well, friend Jasper. In order to set your mind at rest, I shall go and get my overcoat and show you the antidote. (*exit* L. E.

Muddle. Although I've had a good time since my wife has been under the influence of that wonderful drug, I've been continually haunted by a dread that something might happen.

(*goes to chair* L. *of table*

Enter DABBLER, L. E.

Dabbler. It's gone!

Muddle. What's gone?

Dabbler. The overcoat and antidote are lost!

Muddle. Antidote lost? Then I'm lost! Oh, Lord!

(*drops on chair*

Dabbler. We may yet hope to recover it; it may be only stolen.

Muddle. Lost, strayed or stolen, what's the difference, it's gone and I'll be hanged.

Dabbler. Oh, not quite so bad as that, you'll only be electrocuted.

Muddle. Oh, what shall I do?

Dabbler. There's one thing you can do. Send for an officer and deliver yourself up to justice, or flee the country at once. Yet, I have still one hope. There's a scientific friend of mine in the city, who has a large supply of the antidote in stock. I'll go to the depot and telegraph him to send me some at once. I am sure he will do so—that is, if he has not gone to Europe.

Muddle. If he has not gone to Europe, and the life of my wife hangs upon this, if— (*excited*

Dabbler. Oh, well, don't get excited over it. Mistakes will happen in the best regulated families, you know. I have lost my overcoat.

Muddle. Oh, hang your overcoat.

Dabbler. I did hang it in the hall, but it's not there now. I suppose some tramp must have stolen it. It's not the value of the overcoat, but the antidote. I regret this sad occurrence very much, friend Muddle; but brace up old man, and remember you'll only have to die once.

Muddle. Die once, and ain't that quite enough? How many times do you want a man to die, in order to be dead? (*rises and goes to* R. E.) I must have fresh air, or I shall go mad. Dabbler, do hasten to the depot and telegraph to your friend and tell him to send on the antidote as quick as possible. It's a matter of life and death.

(*exit* R. E.

Dabbler. It's really too bad. I feel sorry for the old man, and I feel sorry for the loss of my overcoat. I'll go and send that telegram, and at the same time, I'll send a detective up here to trace my coat, and if it's stolen, catch the thief. Even if the old lady should die, she'll only be another martyr to the glorious cause of experimental science, and one failure will be no argument against the general efficacy of my Universal Infallible Remedy, The Concentrated Essence of The Milk of Human Kindness. (*exit* L. E.

Enter SAMMY, *from recess.*

Sam. Well, confound him and his Infallible Remedies and Concentrated Essence, he has turned this house into a wholesale and retail lunatic asylum, and now he's gone for a detective to have me pinched. I guess this must be his overcoat. I dare not go out in the hall to hang it up. I'll go down and leave it with Sally, and she'll put it back where it belongs. He's gone for a detective, eh? I'll feel safer on the outside of this house. Now for the kitchen, a square meal, then through the coal hole to freedom and the open air.

(*exit* R. E., *leaving wig in recess*

Enter ADA, L. E., *followed by* SALLY—ADA *goes to* R. *of table.*

Ada. Sally, you see I've returned sooner than I expected. Well, how's everybody and everything since I've been away?

(*sits at table*

Sally. Everything's topsy turvy, Miss, and as soon as my month is up, I'm going to quit. I can't stand it no longer, so I can't. Your mamma has disappeared, the Lord knows where, and I don't care, and my poor master is out of his head. I saw him a few minutes ago rushing around the garden looking for a nanny goat.

Ada. A nanny goat?

Sally. Yes, Miss Ada, he says that the Infallible Remedy man had a nanny goat in his overcoat pocket, and that he lost it, and that's a clear proof that master's gone crazy. The idea of anyone having a nanny goat in his coat pocket is rhinocerous.

Ada. Preposterous, you mean Sally. For some time past, I have suspected that father's mind was slightly unbalanced, so I have consulted an eminent physician regarding his case; he's a specialist on the mind.

Sally. A specialist in his mind.?

Ada. No, mind doctor, an expert on insanity, a physician who makes the human mind a special branch of study.

Sally. I know one of those brain storm doctors they talk so much about.

Ada. That was my object in visiting the city, to bring this doctor here and have him examine father's brain. I wish to find out if his case is a serious one, and if so, we must send him to a private asylum. (*rises*) Where is father now, Sally?

Sally. In the garden I think, Miss.

Ada. (*goes to* R. E.) Very good, I'll find him and tell him of the doctor's coming, and also prepare papa to receive him. (*exit* R. E.

Sally. Yes, and I'll get Sammy out of here. (*calls*) Sammy, Sammy! (*looks in at recess*) I do declare, he's gone and left his wig behind him. I guess he's in the kitchen. (*gets wig*) No matter, I'll take care of this for him. (*bell heard off* L.) I'll bet that's doctor specialist come to examine master's brains. I'll go and see.

(*exit* L. E.

Enter ADA, R. E., *followed by* MUDDLE.

Ada. Now papa, for my sake, you'll receive the doctor kindly, and allow him to make a thorough examination. I fear your nervous system has gone to pieces.

Muddle. Yes, my dear, and I can't even save the pieces. (*sits* R. *of table*) Well, to please you my dear, I'll receive this doctor.

Ada. (*goes to* L. E.) Thank you, papa, I'll send him to you.

(*exit* L. E.

Muddle. It's a very extraordinary, and unaccountable thing about the loss of Dabbler's overcoat containing the antidote. It has plunged me into a state of nervous prostration, bordering on insanity. My step-daughter imagines there's something wrong with my mental machinery—perhaps she's right. Sometimes I think I am insane. However, it can do no harm to let the doctor make an examination. It may afford me considerable amusement. (*laughs*) It's a good joke though just the same. Ha, ha, ha! I must have a drink on the head of it to quiet my nerves. (*drinks out of bottle*

Enter DEACON SPYDER *and* OFFICER, L. E.

Deacon. (*aside to* OFFICER) Officer, there's your man, do your duty. He's a desperate character, don't let him escape.

Officer) (*aside to* DEACON) No fear sir, if he escapes it'll be over my dead body.

Deacon. (*aside to* OFFICER) Good, I'll leave the rest to you. You have your instructions, see that you carry them out. I'll return shortly. (*exit* L. E.

Muddle. (*does not see* OFFICER) As I said before, I'm not much surprised at my daughter sending for a doctor on insanity. What would she think if she had only known that I may have been guilty of murder.

Officer. (*comes down* C., *aside*) That's my man, sure.

Muddle. (*turns, sees* OFFICER, *aside*) The doctor! (*aloud*) How do you do sir? Be seated. I'm glad to see you.

Officer. You are Jasper Jay Muddle, are you not?

Muddle. (*aside*) A rather queer looking doctor, I must say. (*aloud*) Yes, I am Jasper Jay Muddle, and I understand the nature of your business here.

Officer. Indeed!

Muddle. Yes, you see my daughter told me all, so you can go ahead. I suppose you'll want to see my tongue first?

Officer. To see your tongue?

Muddle. Yes, or to feel my pulse?

Officer. Feel your pulse? You must be crazy!

Muddle. Well, that's what you're here for, ain't it, to see whether I'm crazy or not. You're a mind doctor, are you not?

Officer. No sir, I'm an officer of the law, and I have a warrant for your arrest.

Muddle. (*rises, surprised*) A warrant for my arrest? (*aside*) Is it possible my daughter could have done this? (*aloud*) Officer, what is the charge?

Officer. The murder of your wife, Mrs. Jezabel Muddle.

Muddle. But she may not be dead yet.

Officer. For your sake I hope not, but I must do my duty and arrest you.

Muddle. Never! I shall die first!

MUDDLE *runs to* R. E. *and exits quickly,* OFFICER *runs after him and collides with* SAMMY *as he enters, who is thrown to floor.*

Officer. (*to* SAMMY) Oh, get out of my way! (*exit* R. E.

Sam. Gee gosh, all the lunatics are on the war path. I guess they're playing tag. (*gets up*) I came back after my wig. (*goes to recess*) By thunder, it's gone! Wig or no wig, I must clear out of here before I'm caught. That Infallible Remedy man has gone for a detective. I'd better take off his coat, or I'll spend my honeymoon in Sing Sing pen, so here goes! (*about to take off coat, has back to* L. E.

Enter DR. CRANIUM, L. E.

Dr. Cranium. (*aside*) His daughter told me I would find him in here. (*sees* SAMMY) Ah! sure enough there he is. (*aloud*) Ahem!

Sam. (*turns, sees* DOCTOR, *aside*) The detective, by thunder! I'm pinched at last, but I'll die game!

Doctor. My friend, you need not take off that coat. (R. C.

Sam. Well, I didn't steal it, I only borrowed it, and if you want you can have it, but you can't have me. (*throws coat at* DOCTOR

Doctor. (*throws coat off* L., *aside*) Mad as a March hare. I'll have to humor him. (*aloud*) My friend, I'm glad to see you looking so hale and hearty. Indeed I might say fresh.

Sam. Don't you tell me I'm fresh, or I'll — (*excited*

Doctor. Calm yourself, my friend, I did't intend anything personal I assure you. Now to business—put out your tongue.

Sam. My ma always told me it wasn't polite to put out my tongue at folks.

Doctor. Oh, but I have an object in asking you. It's part of my profession, you see, so you needn't mind me.

Sam. Well, if I needn't mind you, here goes. (*opens mouth a little*

Doctor. Open your mouth a little wider.

Sam. You ain't going to jump down my throat, are you?

Doctor. Jump down your throat, man, not at all.

Sam. I thought as how you might be one of those juggling fellows that find eggs in one's vest pockets and takes silver dollars out of your nose?

Doctor. No, my friend, I'm not as you suppose, a sleight-of-hand performer. In examining your tongue, I simply wish to diagnose your

Sam. Dye my nose? That settles it. There was another fellow here who tried to dye my hair, and see the trick he played upon me. (*removes hat*) No more dyeing goes.

Doctor. (*aside*) I fear he is hopelessly insane. (*aloud*) Permit me to ask you a question?

Sam. Hold on a bit, I've got the floor. Let me ask you a question first; ain't you a copper in plain clothes, sent here to pinch me?

Doctor. No, my friend, I'm a mind specialist.

Sam. What's that?

Doctor. An alienist, an expert on insanity. I am the head of a Lunatic Asylum.

Sam. You're one of the head crazy ones?

Doctor. No sir, I'm the head physician, and your daughter brought me here to examine and report upon your mental condition.

Sam. (*aside, laughs*) My daughter. Well, if this ain't a bug house proper, I'll eat my hat. This may be one of the crazy ones broke loose. I'll keep him at a safe distance, he may be dangerous.

Doctor. (*looks at watch*) Now my friend, as my time is money, we'll proceed at once to business. (*advances toward* SAMMY) I want to examine the pupil of your eye.

Sam. (*picks up chair*) Stand back on your life! I ain't got no pupils in my eye. Don't you dare to come near me! (*ready to strike*

Doctor. Why not, my friend?

Sam. (*at* R. *corner*) Because you've been eating onions.

Doctor. (*at* L. *corner, aside*) He's certainly insane, I never ate an onion in my life. (*aloud*) Now answer me one last question: do you ever feel a strange sensation about your head?

Sam. Yes, and so would you, if all your hair fell off in one night.

Doctor. I mean inside your head? Do you ever experience a strange buzzing noise?

Sam. If you mean to tell me I've got a buzz saw in my head, I'll lay you out cold.

(SAMMY *and* DOCTOR *struggle ad. lib., and exeunt* R. E

Doctor. (*calls*) Help, help!

Enter ADA, L. E., *followed by* SALLY.

Ada. I am sure I heard cries for help. Go, Sally, and find out what's the matter. It may be a quarrel between father and the doctor.

Sally. It may (*goes to* R. E.) and then again it may not. I'll go and see. (*exit* R. E.

Ada. This entire household is in a terrible state of commotion, and for the life of me, I cannot ascertain the cause. Oh, what can be the matter with everything and everybody.

Enter SAMMY, R. E., *backwards.*

Sam. Well, I guess I've settled him.

Ada. (*in* L. *corner*) Settled whom?

Sam. The old fellow that wanted to dye my nose.

Ada. Dye your nose? Are you crazy?

Sam. Not just now, but I soon will be if I don't get out of here!

Ada. Now my good man, collect yourself and tell me who and what you are.

Sam. That's what I'd like to know myself. A short time ago I was a handsome young man, with golden hair flowing down my back, but now I'm shaven and shorn, as the day I was born, and all owing to that Infallible Remedy man. Then along comes another lunatic and tells me I've got a buzz-saw in my head. If that ain't enough to set a fellow crazy, I'd like to know what is. (*excited*

Ada. Now don't excite yourself—keep cool—

Sam. Keep cool? I've been on ice for the last two hours. (*goes* L. E.) I must go now, I can no longer linger here. I have an engagement. (*exit* L. E.

Ada. What an eccentric individual! I wonder who he is and what he could have been doing here? Sally ought to have returned by this time. I hope nothing serious has happened to the doctor.

Enter DOCTOR, R. E., *coat torn, nose bloody, etc.*

Oh, doctor, what's the matter? Have you seen papa?

Doctor. Oh, yes, I've seen papa, and our interview was brief and bloody. Your papa is a raving maniac. He should be put in a straight jacket and a padded cell. He is hopelessly insane, the worst case of brain storm I ever met.

Ada. Alas! my worst fears are realized, but I did not imagine he was so dangerous

Doctor. As dangerous as a mad bull. It is not safe to have him at large any longer. At any moment he is liable to commit murder. Miss Bramble, would you kindly show me a place where I can wash off this blood, and then perhaps I can ascertain how much of my nose remains on my face.

Ada. (*goes to* L. E.) This way, doctor, and believe me, I'm heartily sorry for what has happened. (*exit* L. E.

Doctor. (*goes to* L. E.) I dare say, but you're not half as sorry as I am. (*exit* L. E.

Enter SALLY, R. E.

Sally. Oh, my poor Sammy's got into tronble. He was fighting with that brain doctor, and he's gone and half killed him.

(*goes to* L. E.

Enter MUDDLE, R. E.

Muddle. Well, I threw him into the fish-pond. Let him get out if he can. (*sees* SALLY, *goes and sits* R. *of table*) Sally, did you see anything of a summer overcoat which Mr. Dabbler left hanging in the hall?

Sally. Oh no indeed sir! not a summer overcoat did I see this summer.

Muddle Did you take notice of any tramps prowling around the neighborhood?

Sally. Not one, sir, except old Deacon Spyder.

Muddle. I hardly think he'd steal it. The overcoat containing the antidote is gone forever.

Sally. It's too bad, sir, about the nanny goat, but if a Billy goat would do as well, I could tell you where you could get one cheap.

Muddle. Sally, get out, you don't know what you're talking about.

Sally. (*goes to* L. E., *aside*) I'm sorry I had to lie to him about the overcoat, but I mustn't give Sammy away now. I must find out what he did with it. (*exit* L. E.

Muddle. It's all very strange. The idea of my step-daughter bringing an officer here to have me arrested and telling me he was a mind specialist. I've often heard that women were more cunning than men. I can now believe it.

Voice (*heard off* L.) "Evening papers! Last edition. All about the mysterious poisoning of a wife by her husband. Evening papers!"

Muddle. Oh Lord, it's in the newspapers already. I wonder if they've got my picture? I might as well give myself up to justice and end my miserable existence. In my present frame of mind, death would be a relief to me.

Enter ADA, L. E.

Ada. Oh papa, what have you done?

Muddle. What have I done? That's a nice question for you to ask me! What have I done? I've just served him right.

Ada. Served him right? Oh, how can you say that, when he may never recover.

Muddle. Nonsense, he'll come out all right: all he has to do is to keep his head above water.

Ada. His head is above water, he's bathing his nose now, but it still continues to bleed, and he may bleed to death.

Muddle. Well, I don't care, it serves him right. You're responsible for it all. What made you bring an officer here to have me arrested and then tell me a lie about his being a mind doctor? That was a nice trick, I must say.

Ada. (*aside*) An officer to have him arrested. I fear it's only too true. Papa's insane and must be incarcerated.

Enter OFFICER, R. E.

Officer. (*sees* MUDDLE) Ah! there you are! You shan't escape me this time.

(*puts handcuffs on* MUDDLE, *who then rises and goes to* R. *corner*

Ada. (*to* OFFICER) Hold, sir! who and what are you?

Muddle. (*to* ADA) You ought to know. This is the officer you

brought here to have me arrested, alias, your Mind Specialist.

Ada. I never saw this person before in all my life! (*to* OFFICER) Sir! what is the charge and who is his accuser?

Officer. (*produces warrant*) He is charged with the murder of his wife and his accuser is —

Enter SALLY, L. E.

Sally. (*announces*) Deacon Spyder. (*exit* R. E.

Enter DEACON SPYDER, L. E.

Officer. Yes, this is the gentleman who swore out the warrants for the arrest of Jasper Jay Muddle and one Phineas Dabbler, his accomplice.

Deacon. Yes, Miss Bramble, as a lover of law and order, I deemed it my duty to swear out the warrant and have them arrested for the murder.

Ada. But Mr. Busybody, what proof had you that a murder had been committed.

Deacon. I'll soon show you the proofs, if it has not been removed. (*goes to recess*) The body of Mrs. Muddle is—

Enter SALLY, R. E.

Sally. Right here and can speak for herself.

Enter MRS. MUDDLE, R. E.

Omnes. Alive—

Sally. And kicking.

Mrs. M. Yes, alive, to thwart my enemies. I pretended to be unconscious to find out your little scheme. You thought me dead, but I was not. I overheard every thing.

Muddle. (*in* R. *corner, aside*) Oh Lord, I wish I was dead right now.

Sally. She wasn't dead, she was only playing possum. (*to* DEACON) Oh, the depravity of human nature.

Deacon. There has been a deadful mistake somewhere, I can't see through it.

Sally. Of course you can't, because you ain't so wide awake as you think you are. You've been beaten at your own game.

Dabbler. (*heard off* L.) Where's my old friend, Jasper Jay? I've got the antidote.

Muddle. Oh darn the antidote.

Enter DABBLER, L. E., *goes to* MUDDLE, *does not see* MRS. MUDDLE *near screen.*

Dabbler. It's all right, we are saved; the antidote will be here in a few hours.

Enter SAMMY, L. E., *wears wig, with overcoat, hands same to* SALLY, *stand up* L. C.

Sally. Oh, much less than that. Here's your overcoat and nanny goat right here.

Dabbler. An honest thief, suffering from remorse of conscince,

returned it. All this trouble would never have occurred, if my overcoat had not been stolen.

Sally. It never was stolen, only borrowed to be returned in the nick of time.

Dabbler. So much the better, we can now take care of your wife.

Mrs. M. (*comes* C., *to* DABBLER) You need not trouble yourself, sir, his wife can take care of herself.

Muddle. You bet she can!

Dabbler. Alive! A miracle! A miracle!

Mrs. M. No miracle at all, sir, I was never under the influence of your so-called drug.

Dabbler. Strictly speaking, Madam, it's not a drug, but the Concentrated Essence of The Milk of Human Kindness.

Muddle. (*aside*) The Concentrated Essence of damn nonsense is what I'd call it.

Mrs. M. It's now time for me to assert my authority. (*to* OFFICER) Officer, take that vinegar face meddlesome old fool away; the sight of (*indicates* DEACON) him makes me sick.

Officer. (*to* DEACON) I must place you under arrest.

(OFFICER *takes handcuffs off* MUDDLE *and puts them on* DEACON

Deacon. But officer, I've done nothing.

Officer. You have done altogether too much. You have made groundless charges against innocent persons and you must answer to the law.

Deacon. But officer, I can explain.

Officer. Then come along and explain to the Captain at the station.

(*exit* OFFICER *and* DEACON, L. E.

Sally. (*at* L. E.) Oh, the depravity of human nature. (*sings*) "Will you come into my parlor, said the spider to the dear little fly."

Ada. Sally, go and bring the doctor here.

Sally (*looks off* L.) Here he comes, Miss, bringing himself, a little disfigured, but still in the ring.

Enter DOCTOR, L. E., *holding handkerchief to nose.*

Ada. (*to* MUDDLE) Now papa, you owe the doctor an apology for having assaulted him.

Muddle. (*crosses* DABBLER *to* R. C.) I never saw the gentleman before in all my life—I swear it!

Doctor. He is right, Miss Bramble, we have never met before. This is not the person who assaulted me.

Ada. There's some mystery here. (*to* DOCTOR) But you said it was papa.

Doctor. (L. C.) Then all that I can say is that you must have two papas. (SAMMY *laughs loudly,* DOCTOR *sees him*) Ah, there is the scoundrel who assaulted me.

Sam. Well, I salted you because you was too fresh, you told me I had a brain storm and a buzz-saw in my head.

Mrs. M. Its only right that those practical jokers should be made pay for their fun. Doctor, send in a bill of damages.

Doctor. No, thanks, Madam, I've got damages enough. The painful recollection of this professional visit will linger long in my memory.

Ada. Mamma, since it was all a mistake, why not forgive and forget.

Muddle. Yes, my dear, let us kiss and make up.

Mrs. M. Silence sir!

Muddle. I'm sorry I spoke. (*sits in chair*, L. *of table*

Ada. Now mamma, won't you give your consent to my marriage with Charles?

Mrs. M. Yes, you can marry the man of your choice.

Sally. And please ma'am, can I marry the man of my choice? See, he has got a new head of hair.

Mrs. M. You can have him, if you don't, no one else will.

Dabbler. A double marriage. I shall give them for a wedding present one bottle of my Concentrated Essence of The Milk of Human Kindness.

Muddle. (*rises*) Now my dear, allow me to say—

Mrs. M. Not one word, sir!

Muddle. (*falls back in chair again*) Crushed again and by "My Awful Wife." A terrible thing to be a hen-pecked husband.

MRS. MUDDLE C., SAMMY *and* SALLY L. C., DOCTOR L., ADA L. *corner*, DABBLER R. *corner*, MUDDLE *in chair at table.*

CURTAIN.

THE END.

SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS.

Home of Jasper J. Muddle—Charles and Ada—"You bet she's coming, look out for the locomotive"—Arrival of the "Awful Wife" who proceeds to make things lively—"Ever since I married your respected mamma, I have given up thinking"—A message from Phineas Dabbler, who dabbles in science—Jasper J's soliloquy—Deacon Spyder astounded—"I must inform Mrs. Muddle of the outrageous conduct of her husband"—"Oh, the depravity of human nature"—Sally and the Deacon have words—"Verily, young woman, you are a stumbling block in the path of the righteous"—Mrs. Muddle on the war-path—Phineas Dabbler arrives to spend his vacation with Mr. and Mrs. Muddle, which leads to more complications—Dabbler explains to Jasper J. his Concentrated Essence of The Milk of Human Kindness, which they agree to try on Mrs. Muddle—More family jars—Sammy Dobbs, who applies for a situation, is hired by Jasper J. and is fired, immediately, by Mrs. Muddle, who dislikes his red hair—Sally, by mistake, mixes Dabbler's Infallible Eradicater and Capillary Transmogrifier and uses the wrong one on Sammy's red hair—"After three doses his mother won't know him"—Jasper J. gives his wife an overdose of Dabbler's Milk of Human Kindness—Deacon Spyder overhears an important conversation—"I'll have them arrested for murder"—A large order for ice—Sammy looses all his red hair—The Deacon speaks his mind—The lost antidote—Jasper, who is thought to be insane, meets the doctor—Disastrous results—Mrs. Muddle returns to life to thwart her enemies—Deacon Spyder receives his just deserts—"Crushed again and by my 'Awful Wife'"—"It's a terrible thing to be a hen-pecked husband."

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R., means Right; L., Left; R. H., Right Hand; L. H., Left Hand; C., Center; S. E., (2d E.) Second Entrance; U. E., Upper Entrance; M. D., Middle Door; F., the Flat; D. F., Door in Flat; R. C., Right of Center; L. C., Left of Center.

R.	R. C.	C.	L. C.	L.

*** The reader is supposed to be upon the stage facing the audience.

NEW PLAYS.

Following are the Plays recently added to the list of

Ames' Series of Standard and Minor Drama

PRICE 15 CENTS EACH.

Pheelim O'Rooke's Curse.

An Irish Drama in 4 Acts, for 15 male and 4 female characters ; doubles in cast so that it can be produced by 7 males and 3 females. The author, Geo. A. Simms, is rapidly coming to the front as a play writer, and in this piece he seems to have displayed his talent in a marked degree. In this piece abounds fine situations, unlooked for developments, etc. ; can be produced by amateurs.

SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS.

ACT I. *Scene 1st*—Laurel Court, England. The appeal and refusal. The whip. Threat. Curse of Pheelim O'Rooke. The hunting party. Hugh Carlton. A dangerous servant. Song, "Bryant Olin!" The accident. Mrs. Carlton and Olin. *Scene 2d*—Pheelim O'Rooke. "Revenge is sweet!" *Scene 3d*—Death of Lord Carlton. "Pheelim O'Rooke it was!"

ACT II. *Scene 1st*—Bryant Olin and Hugh. A perilous undertaking. Hugh in danger. *Scene 2d*—Attempt to kidnap Hugh frustrated by Bryant. A cowardly blow. *Scene 3d*—Mrs. Carlton at home. News of Hugh. Despair. The promise. *Scene 4th*—On the coast. Bryant Olin as a detective; disguises as a fiddler, and meets the gang. *Scene 5th*—Biddy McGee, the "Island star." Hugh and Pheelim. "Caged at last!" The idiot boy. The wreck. Bryant Olin finds Hugh, and is discovered by Biddy, who gives the alarm. *Scene 6th*—Woods. Escape of Bryant.

ACT III. *Scene 1st*—America. Hugh as news-boy. Ira Colton, a friend. *Scene 2d.*—Office of Ira Colton. Hugh as Peter Donelli. Olin in America, in search of Hugh." *Scene 3d*—The den. Pheelim and Peter. Peter tells his adventure. *Scene 4th*—Grog shop. Peter and Bryant. Bar-room fight. *Scene 5th*—The den. Peter and O'Rooke. Capt. Lennox. Peter's illness. Suspicions. Trouble ahead. A plan. O'Rooke drunk. Capt. Lennox carries off Hugh. Bryant in search of Hugh. "Too late!" Mrs. Donneyhue. The curse.

ACT IV. *Scene 1st*—Club room. News of Hugh's escape. Lennox and Clemment to the rescue. *Scene 2d*—Hugh escapes from window. Capt. Lennox and Clemment. The arrest of Capt. Lennox. *Scene 3d*—Capture of Hugh by O'Rooke. *Scene 4th*—The den. The bargain. Song. Rescue of Hugh. Death of O'Rooke. Meeting of mother and son. End of the Curse of Pheelim O'Rooke.

THE COMMERCIAL DRUMMER.

A Drama in 3 Acts, by Thorn Melross, for 6 male and 2 female characters. This piece is immense. It is printed from the author's original manuscript, and has been produced with great success by the American Theatre Co.

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I. Home of the late Richard Marlow. Interview between Frank Ross and Lawyer Dudley. The pious deacon and Verda Muller. Reading the will. Joe's dog collar. Richard Marlow, the raise heir. The child of the Dark Continent in trouble. Three villains. "Ten thousand to silence my tongue!" Zadie, the deserted wife of John Dudley. An attempted murder. Joe's little "barker" interferes. Deacon and Joe. Frank and Verda; his resolve to become a "Commercial Drummer." Zadie gives Verda a home. Mr. Dudley's proposal to Verda, and the misunderstanding. Murder of Deacon Foote, and Frank accused. The struggle, "life or death!"

ACT II. Zadie, Verda, and the tramp. "Painted benches." "My kingdom for some soup!" Booth and Zadie. Attempted murder of Zadie: Ashtor, the tramp interferes, and makes Dudley hand over a "William." Booth and the Indian. Too much beer. The stolen will. Joe in the barrel. Target shooting. Verda's refusal to marry Dudley. Abduction of Verda, and Joe knocked down.

ACT III. Ashtor and Booth. Corn plasters: "There's millions in them!" Olie, the Swede. Zadie, the Census taker. Two "bummers!" Rescue of Verda by Zadie. Frank discovered by Richard, as Booth. "He must die!" A job for Olie. "In the soup!" Hot and cold boxes. Olie and Booth to the rescue of Zadie. Explanations. A new version of McGinty. A love scene. Capture of Verda. Supposed death of Booth. Fright and death of Dudley. Capture of Richard. Frank and Verda secure the fortune at last. Zadie avenged and the "Commercial Drummer" sells corn plasters no more.

THE Intelligence Office.

An original Ethiopian Sketch in 1 Scene for 3 male characters—as produced at Tony Pastor's Opera House. This sketch is extremely ludicrous costumes modern—time in representation 15 minutes.

A NEW PLAY BY LIZZIE MAY ELWYN, AUTHOR OF DOT, THE MINER'S DAUGHTER, ENTITLED

Rachel, the Fire Waif.

A Drama in 4 acts, for 7 male and 4 female characters. Time of performance, 2 hours.

SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS.

ACT I.—Nathan Ellsworth's home—Ray asleep—Alarm of fire—Ray and Drusilla—"I am a Fire Waif"—The two papers—Report of Eugene Burleigh's death"—Aunt Sophy and Barney get into a row—Tabitha packs her valise—Elmer and Ray—Nathan and Barney arrive with Harvey Jackson, who has assumed the name of Eugene Burleigh, who has been rescued from the fire—Drusilla recognizes him—The threat of murder—Barney sings "Swate Little Buther Cup."

ACT II.—Storm—Sophy gives Nathan a piece of her mind—Parson Green receives a rough reception—Thunder and lightning—Jackson recognizes Parson Green, alias Brock—The threat—Brock relates a little story—The plot to murder Elmer Ellsworth and Eugene Burleigh—Barney and Tabitha—Storm continues—Elmer starts for the Lighthouse—Jackson and Ray—The wrecked ship—Ray implores Jackson to go to Elmer's rescue, which he refuses—"Coward, I will save him"—Elmer, Ray and Eugene Burleigh—Eugene disguised as Capt. Brown—Drusilla recognizes his voice—Tabitha's oath.

ACT III.—The forged check—Drusilla again becomes a wanderer—Eugene discovers her note to Ray—Abduction of Eugene Burleigh—Barney is an eye witness—Jackson accuses Elmer of forging the check and helps him to escape—A lost letter—Tabitha, Barney and the flour barrel—Jackson tells Ray about the check—"I never will believe him guilty"—A three month's promise—Nathan and Sophy—"It's my opinion it's a put up job"—Barney's pledge.

ACT IV.—Ray as the wife of Jackson—The abuse—Jackson and Brock—"I'll be even with you"—"Your doom is sealed"—Nathan, Sophy and Elmer in search of Ray—The lost letter turns up, which unravels the mystery of Drusilla—Eugene Burleigh gives a history of the past, which clears Drusilla of the crime of murder and reveals to Ray that Drusilla is her sister—The explosion, in which Jackson is killed—The house enveloped in flames—Firemen rescue the party.

—— PRICE 25 CENTS. ——

—THE— MECHANIC'S REPRIEVE.

A Drama in 3 acts, by John M. Murphy, for 8 male and 3 female characters. Time of playing 1 hour and 50 minutes.

—PRICE 15 CENTS PER COPY.—

SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS.

ACT I.—Colonel Harrington informs his daughter Mary, of Lester Wilson's intended visit—Dan Trogan and the horses—John Rogers, the mechanic—His proposal accepted by Mary—"If a body kiss a body"—Annie and Mary—E. Z. Walker, as a tramp, appears—Annie interested in the tramp—"Me heart is broke and me back is in the same yard," says Dan—Colonel gives his consent for Wilson to address Mary—Mary and Wilson, the proposal rejected—"He's nothing but a mechanic"—A plot to ruin John Rogers—The stolen money and murder of Colonel Harrington—John accused of murder, by Wilson—Mary's faith in her lover—Arrest of Rogers.

ACT II.—The tramp returns, meets Annie and Dan—Annie tells Walker of the murder and the conviction of Rogers—"He hangs today"—"I can and will save him"—Mary intercedes with the Governor for a reprieve—The reprieve granted—"A ride for a life"—Walker tells the Governor that he murdered Col. Harrington, in order to save Rogers—Arrest of Walker, when Louise, Wilson's wife arrives, and swears she saw Lester Wilson murder the Colonel—Wilson and Dan, the bribe rejected—Rogers in prison—Wilson visits Rogers—The insult—Arrival of Mary with the reprieve—"Saved, John saved."

ACT III.—A lapse of one year—Home of John and Mary Rogers—Walker and Annie as lovers—News of Lester Wilson's escape from prison—Mary's forbodings—Lester Wilson's attempt to kill John Rogers, but is foiled by Louise—Dan arrests Lester—"Lester Wilson, you have wronged me deeply, but I forgive you"—"Come friends, let us go in, night's shadows are closing around us. Its gloomy shades are too suggestive of the past, and around the cheery fireplace I can see the faces of the friends, whose love for me was my salvation, in the dark days before I was Reprieved.

NOV 17 1909

LATEST COMEDY DRAMA,

Uncle Jed's Fidelity;

—OR—

The Returned Cowboy.

A Comedy Drama, by Bert C. Rawley, for 4 male and 3 female characters. Costumes modern. Time of playing, 2 hours.

—*SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS.*—

Mr. Western, a strong willed man, objects to his daughter marrying a poor but honest man, and resolves she shall marry his friend, Donald Reeves, a rich man—Isabel refuses—Uncle Jed arrives from the country and intercedes for Isabel, but Mr. Western refuses to believe Donald Reeve a villain—Donald Reeve's forsaken wife arrives and forbids Donald's attention to Isabel—Peregrine Splatter overhears Donald threaten his wife, and becomes his partner for the purpose of bringing him to justice—Col. Western drives Isabel from his house—She returns with Uncle Jed to his country home—Donald Reeves murders his wife and throws the guilt on Isabel's lover, Robert Shelden—His arrest and imprisonment—Robert escapes and at last brings proof that Donald Reeves is the murderer—Donald arrested. Uncle Jed, Jasper, the negro, Polly and Peregrine Splatter make up the comedy parts—This is a play in which all the characters are evenly balanced. Amateurs will find it a good one. Price 15 cts.

The Obstinate Family.

A farce in 1 act, for 3 male and 3 female characters. Scene, plain room. Everyday costumes. Time, 40 minutes. A lover's quarrel between two servants, grows by a very natural process, into what threatens to be a domestic cyclone of vast proportions. The piece is a mere trifle but a very entertaining one. Price, 15 cents.

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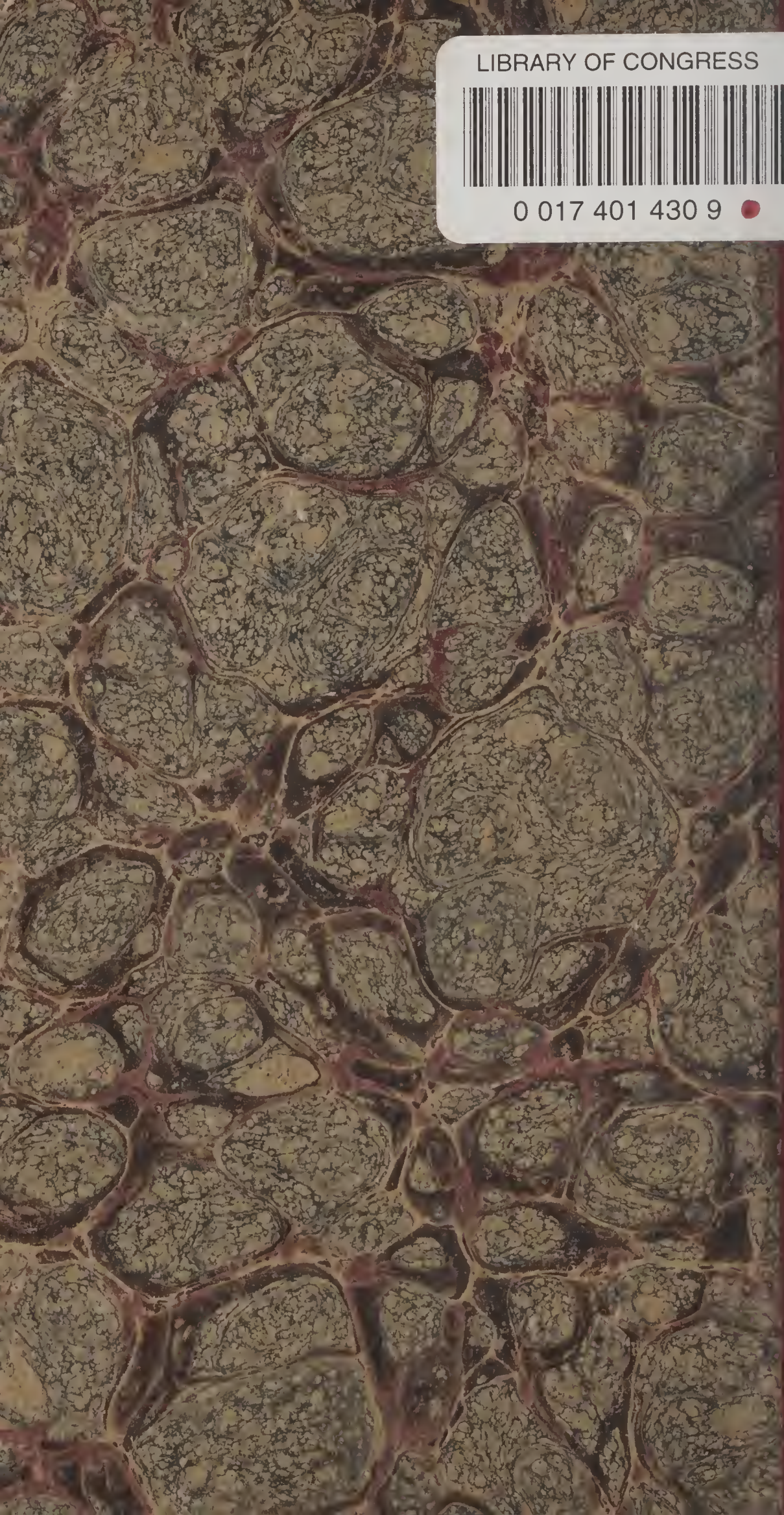

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